

7

modern rock on cue

Petra Tribute
Black Eyed Sceva

Kevin Clay

Soulfood 76

Every Day Life

Cloud Merchants

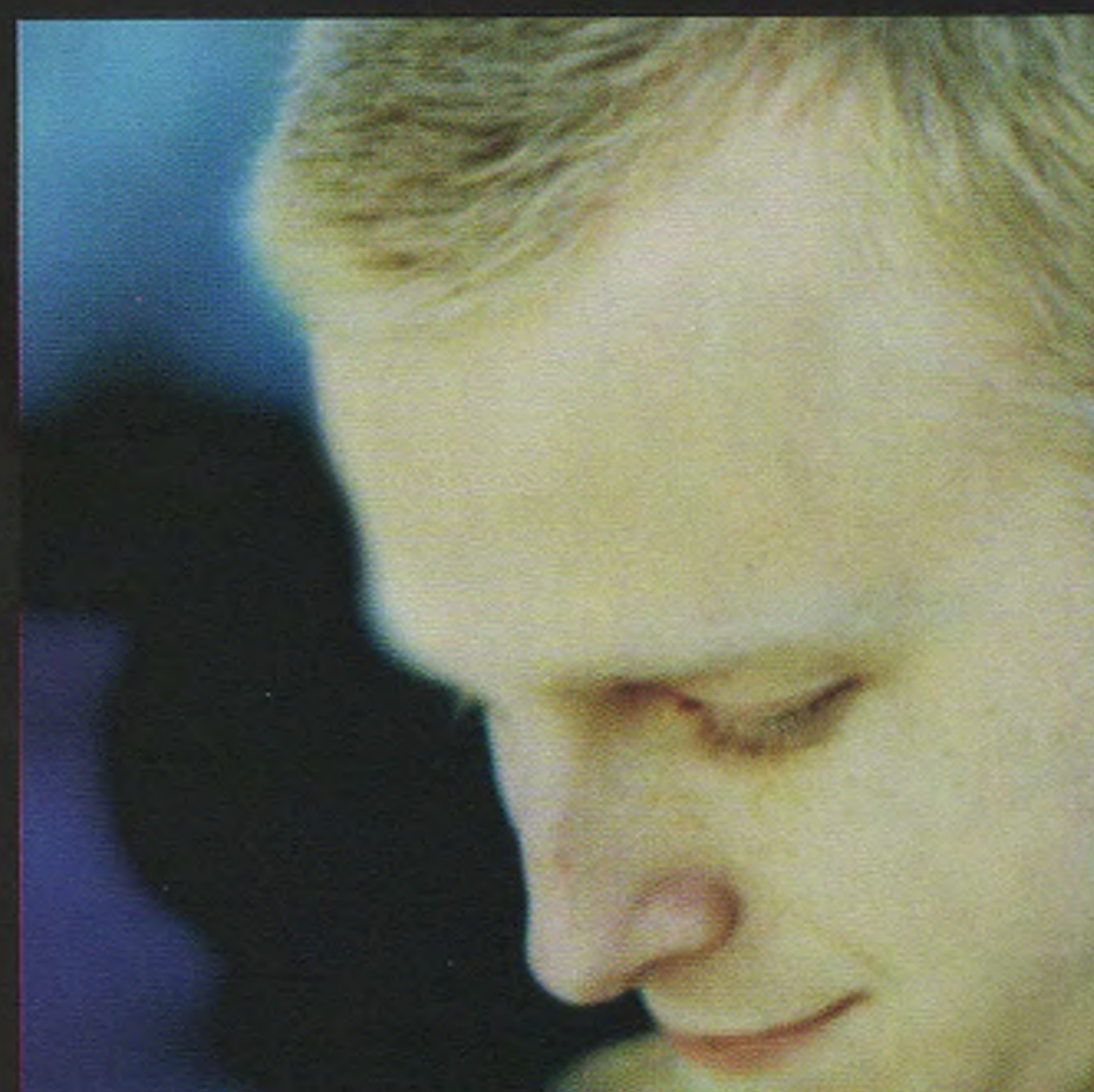
World Wide Message Tribe

Believable Picnic

Blackball

CHARLIE
SEEING IN A WHOLE NEW WAY





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SEVEN

JULY AUGUST 1996
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cover photo by norman jean roy



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Was I dreaming or was I really reading a magazine with honest reviews, a modern rock chart, and no Petra?! Cool! Y'all are doing a groovy thing here! Keep helping spread the good news!

In His Peace,
Kevin Thomas

ALL ABOUT ERIC

I was kinda shocked at how rude the interviewer seemed to be. Why does Eric thank him on his CD? It just really confused me.

(unsigned)
Elmira, MA

Eric was on the road, but a spokesperson at Essential records had this to say: "We appreciate the concern of supportive fans, but Eric was not offended or angered at all by the story in 7ball. We were thrilled with the press, and Eric was happy to be a part of the magazine. We also want to say, keep up the great work (she was talking to us at this point). You are fast becoming the leader in Christian modern rock journalism." Aw, shucks.

NOT ABOUT ERIC

I am a big fan of Starflyer 59. Is there any way that I can get a back issue that would have something on them?

Justin Kemp
Blacklick, OH

JUSTIN: Sorry, Justin, but we don't have any back issues available at this time. We did a Starflyer 59 story way back in our first issue, when their last record came out. You can, however, find that story at 7ball: Online, through CompuServe. Just GO CHRISTIAN CITY and look for the big, red ball. To try CompuServe for FREE, call 800-848-8199 and ask for Representative #767. You'll get your first month and first 10 hours free. End of free plug.

"Gee Bob, isn't 7ball swell?" "Sure is, Larry...I think it's keen!"



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1996

EC-900
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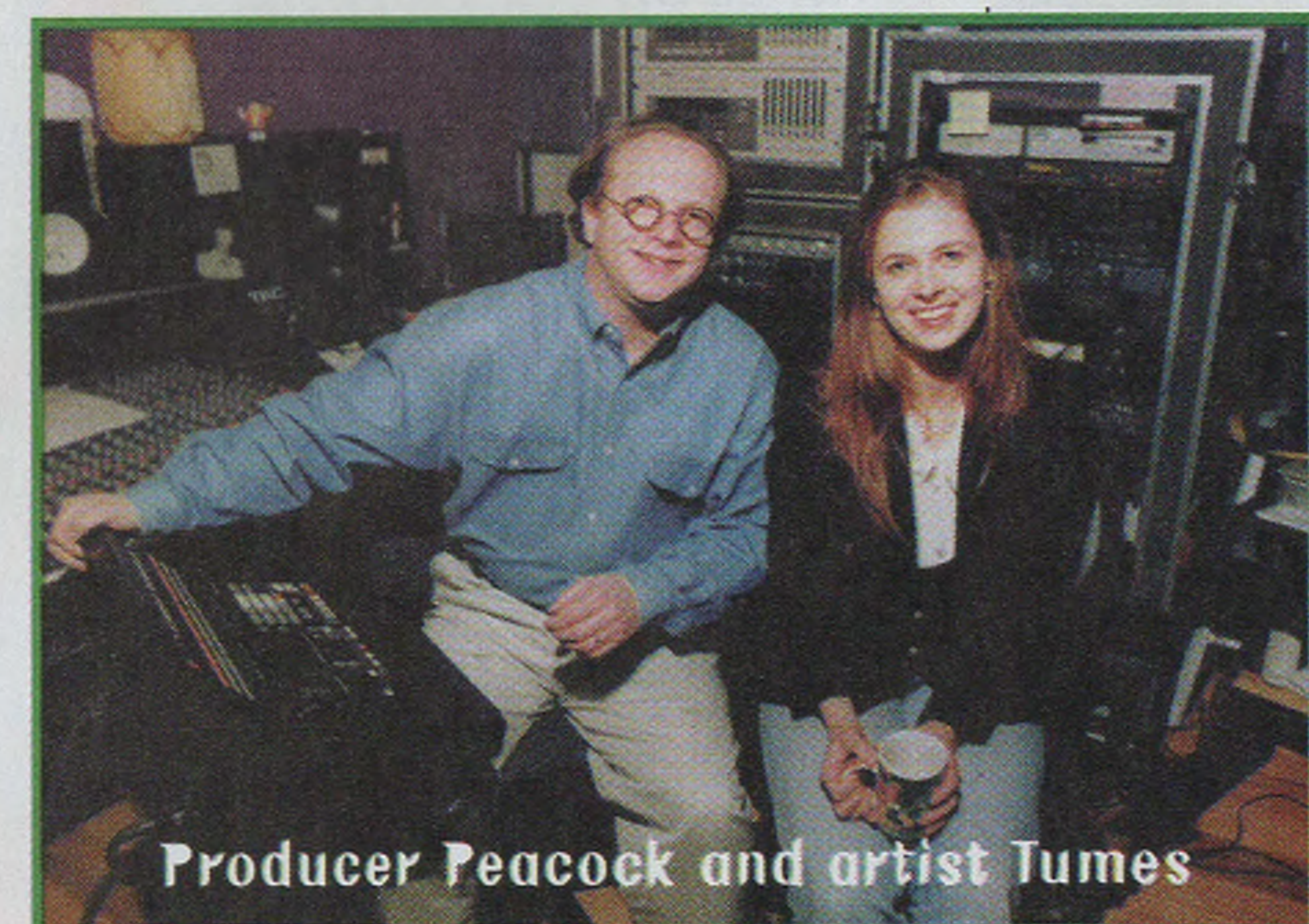
SEVEN DIGIT CHRONICLES

At our weekly **X-FILES** prayer group (launched by Nashville's Gen-X guru **DAVID DARK**), we have interesting guests all the time.

enjoy 13 hours of poetry, visual art and a musical lineup that includes **JARS OF CLAY**, **MXPX**, **HOI POLLOI**, **VIGILANTES OF LOVE** and **JOHNNY Q. PUBLIC** (16 bands scheduled, altogether). Call (717) 392-3206 for more info.

A big thanks goes out to the **NEW UNION** in Minneapolis, for inviting 7ball Associate Publisher **FRANK CHIMENTO** to be one of the judges for their big battle of the bands contest. Frank was elated to relate (but not belatedly) that the big winner was **MINE'S CLARENCE**, a hip band reminiscent of **BEASTIE BOYS**, **RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE** and **RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS**.

E-RACE is a sort of all-star project about racism: **THE GOTE BROTHERS** and guests (including members of **DC TALK**, **OUT OF EDEN** and **GRITS**) have put together a racial discussion set to loping, Southern-fried funk and remarkably slick, r&b melodies.

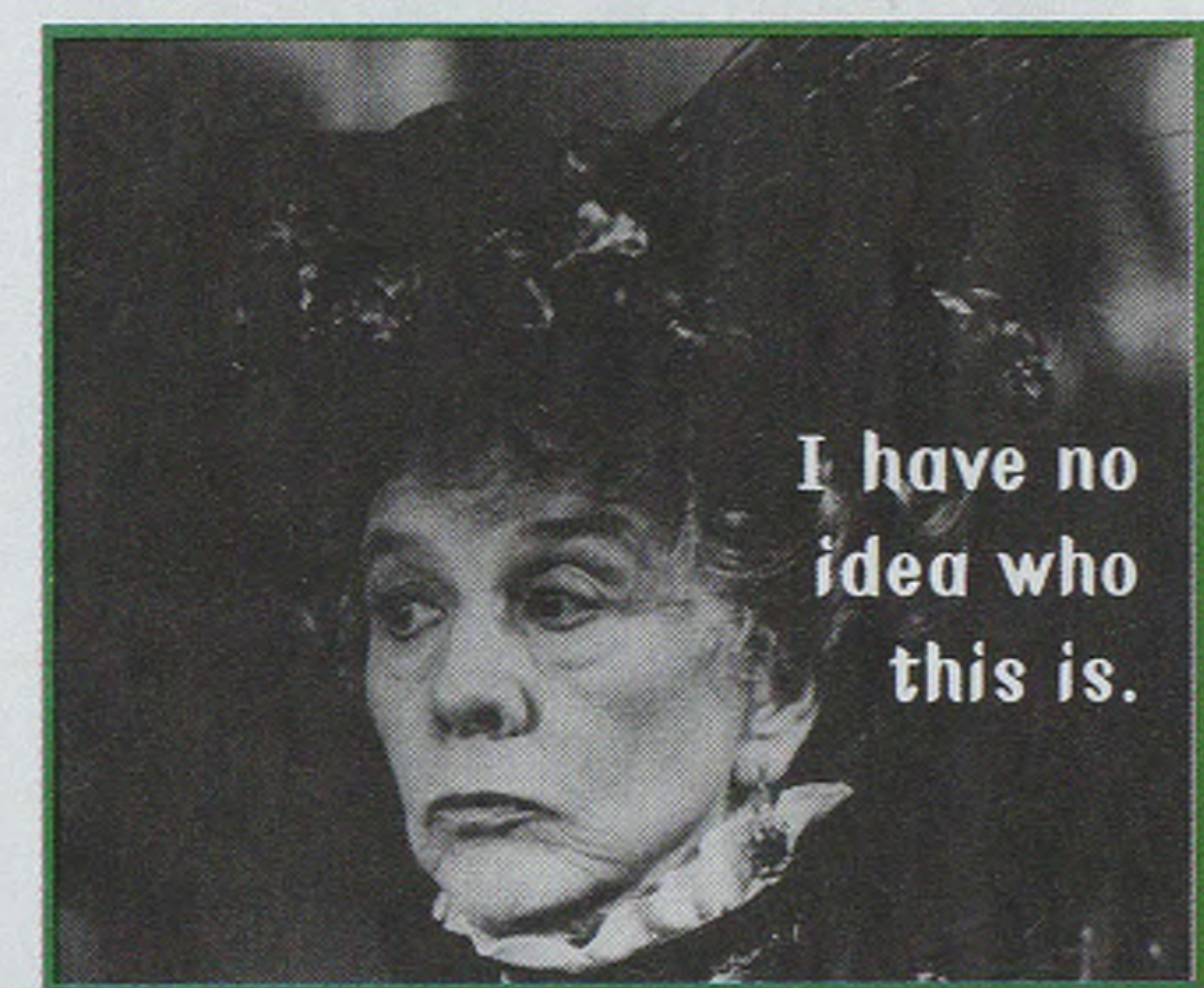


Producer Peacock and artist Tumes

Recently, unsuspecting pop culture victim **MICHELLE TUMES** (just in from her native Australia) attended. Tumes, by the way, is working with producer **CHARLIE PEACOCK** on an authentic worship art-pop album that'll make people think of Enya and Sinead O'Connor. *Listen*, recorded at **RE-THINK STUDIOS**, was delayed because of border troubles, so it comes out in September. Tumes is quick to point out that the county she is from was not part of the penal colony. We also later discovered that she likes the original **TWILIGHT ZONE** better than the X-Files, and she doesn't like **STAR TREK** at all.

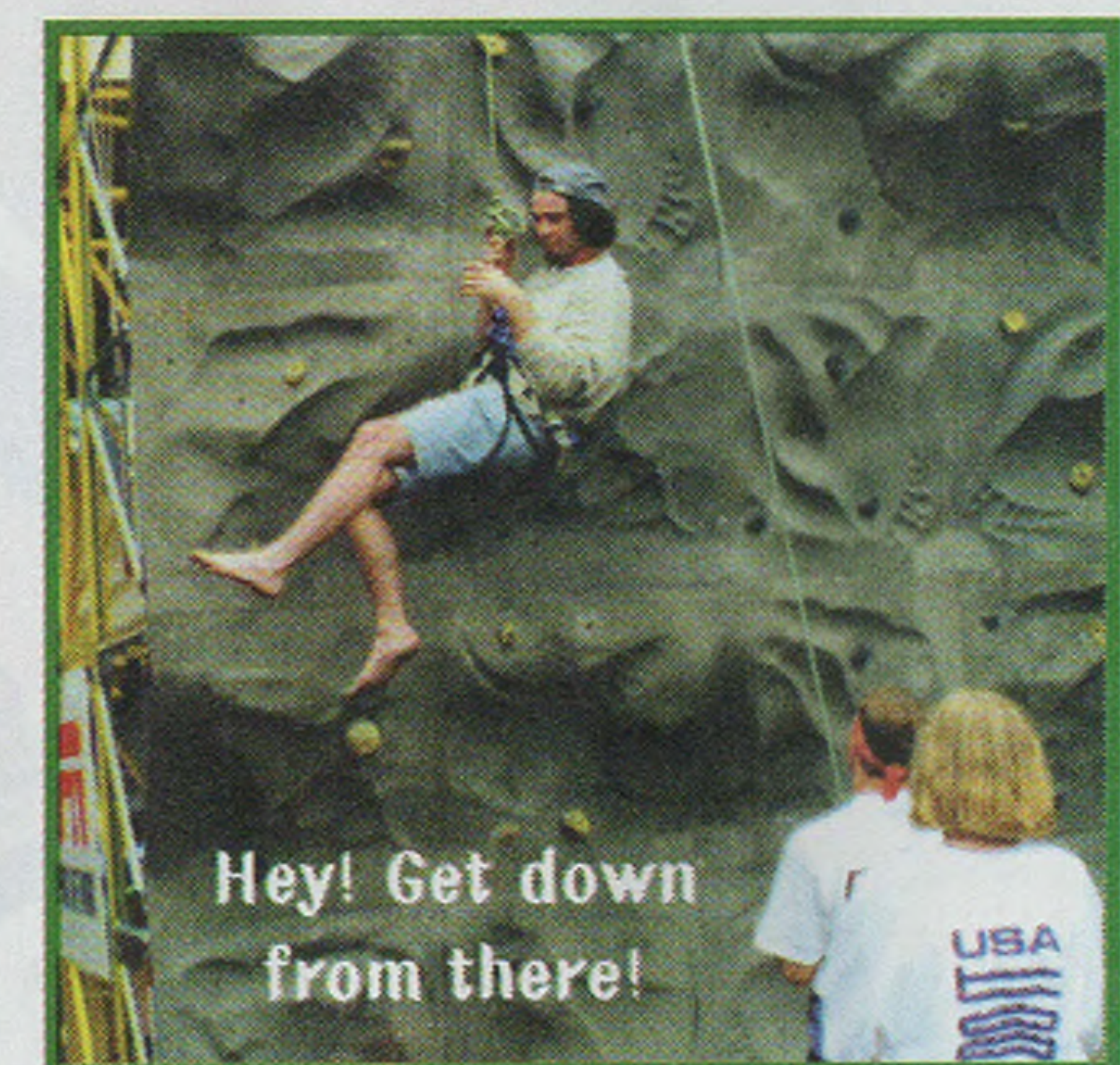
Come see 7ball (hey, that's us) at the **PURPLE DOOR ARTS FESTIVAL**, in Lancaster, PA, on Saturday, August 24th. For \$18.50 you can

the members of DSP will be able to recover financially. If you had signed up for their mailing list at one of the shows in May, e-mail them your address at masaki@ccnet.com and they'll put you back on. If you wrote a check to them, please stop payment on the check. The band's address is P.O. Box 3749 Oakland, CA 94609.



I have no idea who this is.

JARS OF CLAY recently celebrated hitting the half-million mark with sales of their debut. The live event will include a presence on the World Wide Web: Check out the Gold Party Webspace (<http://www.vision3.com/jarsgold>) and you'll find pics and audio from the event, among other goodies. And if that isn't enough, you can still check out their original official website at <http://www.jarsofclay.com>.



Hey! Get down from there!

COMMON CHILDREN recently performed to nearly 3,000 at the ESPN "X" games in Orlando. ESPN generally slots current high profile secular bands like **BUSH** and **SISTER MACHINE GUN**. This is a picture of drummer Hampton Eugene trying to scale the walls.

CNBC'S "AMERICA AFTER HOURS" recently invited "Christian Rock Star" **ERIC CHAMPION** to participate in some sort of talk-show free-for-all: Last April, during a panel discussion on Christian rock, they seemed to think the most qualified panelists should include some guy who claims to have been in Black Sabbath, the artist formerly known as Vanity (now a traditional Gospel singer), a card-carrying atheist, and a writer for SPIN magazine who didn't know anything about Christian rock. Fortunately, Eric was on the panel: he was lucid, level-headed, and made us proud.

7BALL ARMY UNITE: We are doing what we can to raise the awareness of alternative Christian rock (you probably know this). Surprisingly, this is still a new thing in some corners of the Christian music industry. So, please make a note of those who advertise in 7ball—when you get a chance, call or write these people and thank them for supporting us.

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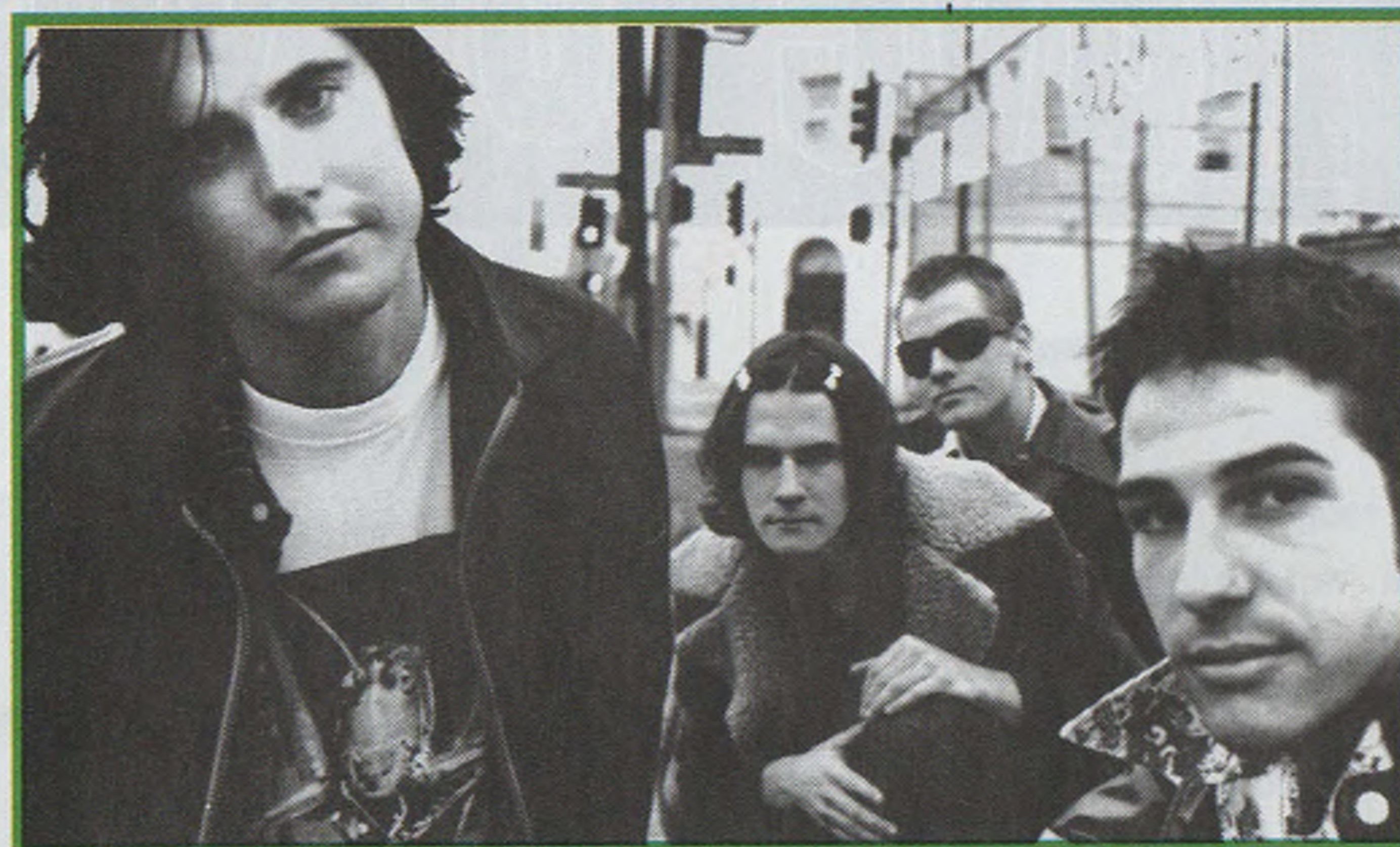
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BRAINSTORM





band that eventually culminated in a decision to call it quits.

"I couldn't listen to the record for probably a good three or four months after we recorded it," drummer **WAYNE EVERETT** says. "It was a fight, you know. It was really Eric and Andy and I versus Tim."

THE LAST PRAYER CHAIN STORY

Progress was the fuel to the existence of the Prayer Chain from the beginning. To musically surpass everyone around them was the lone bond that has held the four members together and motivated them.

But with the release of *Antarctica*, the machine will stop and grow cold forever.

It all started in 1990, when the four members promised they would "never sit still," as guitarist **ANDY PRICKETT** puts it. Six years later, those same four are now trying to heal and forget what it cost to reach that point.

"When you're first getting together you just kinda brush stuff off," Prickett says. "It's no big deal; it's not the biggest part of your life. But then when it is ... you start to realize maybe you can't live with these people."

Throughout their existence, the moodiness and biting angst of their music became more apparent with each record. While this provided brilliant spiritual insights and brilliant art, it was also the cause of what seems in hindsight an inevitable demise. Speaking with each member separately, one discovers the fruitless striving for unity failed simply because the music had become too personal to be a group effort. *Mercury* documented the struggles within the

Vocalist **TIM TABER** realized the opposition. "I just kinda said, 'Ok, you guys have a complete vision for where you want to go with this album, so go with it.'" He says Mercury was mostly a vision of Everett's and Campuzano's.

However, each member does agree that through this bitter struggle *Mercury* would also be the closest the band would ever come to the complete culmination of its talents. "To me," bassist **ERIC CAMPUZANO** says, "it was a very, very spiritual and musical record."

It was during the writing of the album that Campuzano, Everett and Prickett realized an artistic milestone. But they all four also realized that Taber was not on the same page as the rest.

They tried to solve their problems democratically, as they always had. Soon this began to fail as well, just as others had told them it would. In fact, Taber recalls, one of those naysayers was producer **STEVE HINDALONG**. "He told us from day-one, when we recorded our demo. He was like, 'You guys are a democracy?' That doesn't work. You can't be in a band and have democracy. You'll fall apart.' And you know, maybe ultimately he was right."

With Taber's passive attitude

and problems with the record company, the angstful charge of the band heightened.

"We were sort of attacking each other through the music," Campuzano says. "Taking out our frustrations and our disagreements through lyrics or the bass line or the drum part. And then on top of that were taking out our frustrations on the Christian music scene. Our band was very reactionary."

At one point, the band thought they were finished with the album when record executives said they didn't like it: It was too negative, the band was told, it didn't sound enough like a

"Christian" record. So the band went back into the studio and wrote five more songs.

One of those songs, "Sky High," made it on the final record. The remaining four songs appear on *Antarctica*, along with eight live songs from the band's final performance.

But the disagreements began boiling long before the making of *Mercury*. The *Shawl* tour is when things started to go awry. Taber remembers in 1993 when Everett threatened to quit after the tour was finished. "I had a lot of hatred for Tim Taber for a long time," Everett admits. He told him so on that tour.

If the band had broken up then, they all agree, it would have failed: They needed to go one step further, personally and creatively, with *Mercury* before closure could be made. But that record, satisfying as it is, is something they all want to leave behind now.

"The record wouldn't have come out the way it did if that tension hadn't been there," Everett says. "I do think that is part of the beauty in it. But as far as the break-up of the band is concerned, I just don't want to go through that again. I think great records can be made without that kind of negativity."

These days: Prickett is producing Pushstart Wagon, a young, ragged pop band; Taber is collaborating with Mortal's Jyro and worship master Chris Lizotte on a more "straight forward" worship album; Everett and Campuzano are playing with Starflyer 59, and working on a small project called the Lassie Foundation.

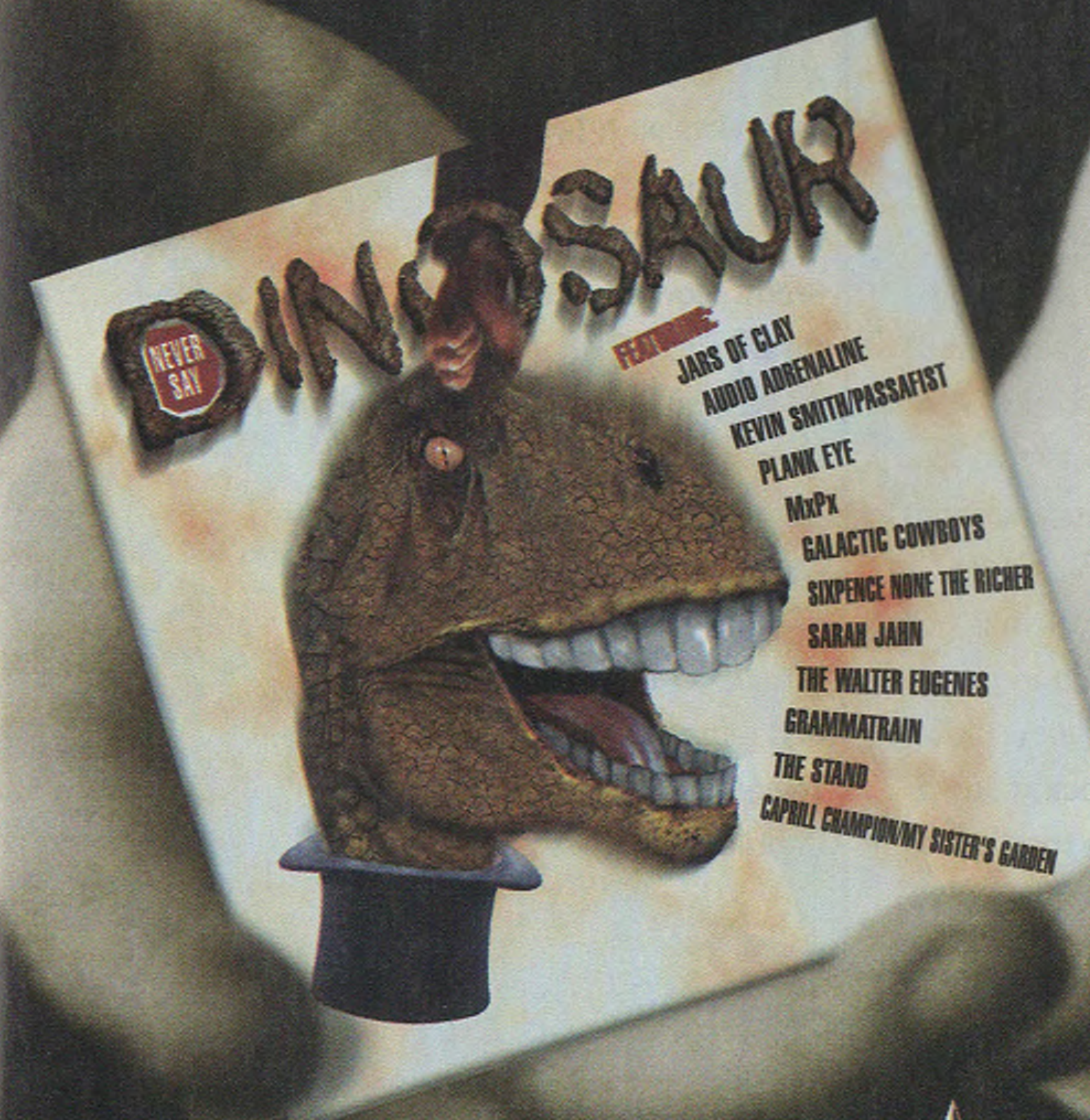
There is also talk of Everett, Campuzano and Prickett writing together once more. ●



The record everyone's talking about...

FEATURING:

JARS OF CLAY
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AUDIO ADRENALINE
TASTE AND SEE
KEVIN SMITH/PASSAFIST
LOUIE'S SOLO
PLANK EYE
ALL THE KING'S HORSES
MXPX
I CAN BE FRIENDS WITH YOU
GALACTIC COWBOYS
NOT OF THIS WORLD
SIXPENCE NONE THE RICHER
ROAD TO ZION
SARAH JAHN
YANWEH LOVE
THE WALTER EUGENES
JUDAS' KISS
GRAMMATRAIN
WAKE UP
THE STAND
PIED PIPER
CAPRILL AND MY
SISTER'S GARDEN
THE COLORING SONG



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Charlie

In the mid-'80s,

Charlie Peacock

was the darling

of alternative

Christian rock.

Somewhere

along the line, it

was the '90s,

Christian radio

had discovered

him, and he'd

moved from

Sacramento to

Nashville to

produce. His new

record proves

you can go home

again.

By
Brian
Quincy
Newcomb

Peacock

Growing up
is hard to
do. Even
when lots of
people are
waiting for you
to start acting
like a grown
up, the
process of
maturity
is

often
hard work. It
would quite
naturally,
then, be much
harder to grow
up in public; to
make one's
decisions and
mistakes in
front of anybody
and everybody.

For most of Charlie Peacock's career in music, he's been growing up in public. At least in the spiritual sense. By the time Peacock's music was first recorded for the mass audience—on Vector's debut, *Mannequin Virtue*—his tabloid years were behind him. Playing clubs at an early age, Peacock has spoken of how alcoholism thwarted his musical aspirations, and nearly capsized his marriage and took his life. The road to recovery led him to a reunion, when he followed his wife Andi into a vibrant faith in God. Very soon he was working with the good folk of the Warehouse fellowship in Sacramento, Ca., that not only housed Vector, but other experimental Christian music artists like 77's and Steve Scott.

It was
the child-like

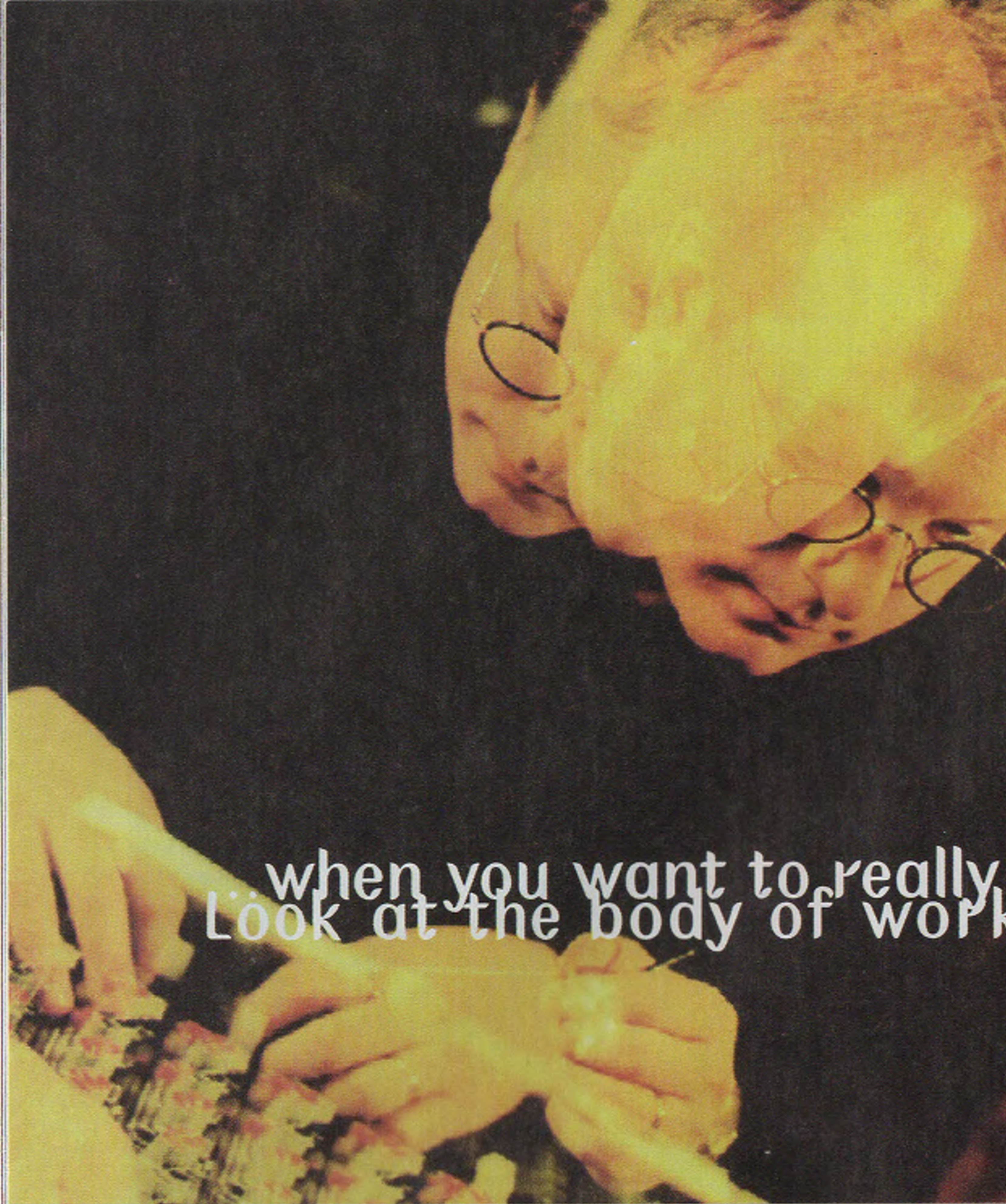
quality, a
certain joy-
ous, young-
in-faith ex-
uberance,
together with
his fresh
approach and
jazz-influenced,
new-wave/pop
style, that made
Peacock's solo
debut, *Lie Down in
the Grass* ('84),
stand out as such
a delightful tri-
umph among
starving Christian
alternative music
fans. "Watch the
children's
eyes/...Where does
your innocence lie?"

Peacock had written in "Mannequin Virtue," a lyric he shared with Vector's Steve Griffith. Although his songs dealt with any number of heady topics, Peacock continually looked through a child's eyes at this world of wonder and found there the unrelenting, accepting care and welcome of God's outstretched arms. Even when he challenged the world for its brokenness, its dishonesty and fascination with chaos, it was the misuse of that child-like curiosity and innocence that earned most of his anger.

These themes have continued to be an important part of Charlie Peacock's work and world. Peacock made a self-titled album that got dis-

tributed through Island Records to the main-stream marketplace. When that album failed to make Peacock the pop star many thought he would be, he set his sights on fulfilling his relationship with the Christian fans who had come to love and support his music. Peacock moved to Nashville (the unofficial Christian music mecca) and signed a long term recording and producing contract with Sparrow. Since, he's released a few solo efforts and worked with such artists as Amy Grant, Margaret Becker and Out of the Grey. Now, Peacock is launching his own company, rethink, with his new album, *strange-language*.

When I caught up with Charlie on the telephone, a number of years had passed since we last talked, yet the life-issues had remained the same. As Charlie



when you want to really look at an artist, don't look at one record, don't look at one painting, and depth of their work, and then you'll know the artist.

it should it look like? I guess every record proposes those same kind of questions about what I want to do artistically, because I have a tremendous amount of freedom to do pretty much whatever I want.

When you're producing a record for someone else, your job is to guide the artist and help them create a

product that best represents them to the buying public and sells records for the company. Are you more willing to

take risks on your own albums?

Oh, most definitely. Part of that is that I have so many things going, so many things that I can do vocationally. In that comes some freedom and the way I feel about it is: if I don't recognize that freedom and use it, then I'm kind of being irresponsible. On the other hand, if I'm looking at a young artist's career that I'm working with, and they want to do things that would perhaps limit their potential and the possibilities, then I have to at least tell them about that so they can be aware of it and know that that is a creative choice as well, and be willing to accept the terms.

When you started off you were considered "alternative." Then there was the move to Nashville and some (even me) suggested you'd sold out and gone pop. With the last album, and now with the new release, there's this buzz that this is the old alternative Charlie. Given your breadth of musical experience, how do you decide what kind of record you want to put your name on?

I think the motivation now is just to enjoy music, to have fun with it, and continue to ride the continuum that began when you were a kid and got into music in the first place. It's to kind of rest in that, and not get too caught up in all the things that are going on. You can't help but borrow from things that

you're affected by in culture, and certainly Christians should be cultural people, too. So, as things shift and change in mainstream culture, they obviously affect my creative choices too. In my new record you can pretty much hear my entire musical history. You can just look at all the places I've gone and the things I've listened to, the music I've liked and that has inspired me. I think what you have to do is wear your inspiration well, and leap with courage into those areas where you can be original and put a new twist on things.

What new twists do you bring to the new album? Where do you feel your freedom and originality is as a creative artist?

I would say that it was in never feeling that it had to sound like something else

that already existed. I'm not afraid of that if it happens naturally, but I never go out of my way to say that I won't feel good about myself as an artist unless I create something that sort of sits on top of something that's contemporary. I guess I'm not afraid to both date myself as well as be current, or contemporary. Maybe that's what makes it different, that I'm not sitting smack dab in the middle of one particular genre.

I think that's real indicative of the generation I grew up with, those of us that are still musicians. I think I've proven at this juncture, after being an artist for 20-plus years and a recording artist for the last 14, 15 years now, that there are limitations to my commercial viability in the context of my own artistry. I'm pretty comfortable with that now, but it took me a little while to get there.

Like I was saying before about working with younger artists, artists need to be aware that from a craft standpoint that if they are persistent at making three-legged chairs then they will have a smaller audience. That if they get on board with making the four-legged chair then there's a pretty good chance they can tap into a vast audience. I've just had to recognize that I'm the kind of artist who moves in and out of that. Depending on my disposition and what I'm interested in, I'll make a few four-legged chairs, but I won't take the meeting with the man that says you can only make four-legged chairs. I just won't go there. I guess I have enough of that '60s true artist paradigm in me that I have to have the freedom to make what it is that I feel compelled to make.

I'm willing to admit that I love pop singles. I think there's a certain art in making great pop singles, but I also love very esoteric, strange music. I'm definitely in the Duke Ellington camp, that there's only two kinds of music: good and bad. I've tried to be a part of what I consider to be good music; not always music that I embrace and listen to, but with my own taste. I'm trying to look at individuals and look at their lives and what they are trying to contribute and really find my place to plug in with that. To me, that's a higher principle than your career.

First in that alternative enclave, then moving to "Christian Music Central" in Nashville, you've had to deal with the limitations of genre categories. Is that something

that's limited you?

The thing is that categories always apply for a time, but things will always change. I've had some good models that I've followed in the music business, people that I've sought to emulate in terms of their staying power. One is Miles Davis. Probably most people who listen to my music wouldn't even know who Miles Davis was, but I'd say he had the most profound effect on me as a musician. He was not afraid to be popular, and he was not afraid to separate himself from the pack. Another great thing about Miles that I've tried to implement in my own life, is the nurturing of other musicians. The nurturing of young people to help them toward what they've been called to do, and one of the ways that I've been able to do that has been through producing. When you look at his career, 50 years of music almost, it's unbelievable the output. And it doesn't always hit the mark of his greatest stuff, I don't think anyone can do that. But what's really important—and I think even [Francis] Schaeffer was really on to this in terms of his theology and art—was that, when you want to really look at an artist, don't look at one record, don't look at one painting. Look at the body of work, the influence, the breadth and depth of their work, and then you'll know the artist.

The other one is James Taylor, but for a wholly different reason, and that is that he hasn't changed one bit. His whole emphasis has been on the songs. He's just classic. A classic songwriter, which is always an encouragement to me; not to lose my songs in the midst of my cleverness.

What impact has Nashville, and the opportunities to work within ccm made on your music, and perception of yourself as an artist?

What has been cool for me, since I came to Nashville is that I came here after being wired for six years with a very elitist approach. When I came here, I felt that God had really softened my heart to where I really wanted to open myself up to the Church. I really had had no contact with any church other than my home fellowship, and really had never been a part of the Church, as far as traveling and performing my music, or any of that. I was interested to see who these people were. I wanted to meet them, and possibly rub shoulders with them. I've prayed for the last

seven years for God to destroy the snob in me so that I could love the church, because I became convinced a few years ago that no matter what I did artistically, no matter how accomplished it was or how much recognition I received, if I didn't love the church I was absolutely worthless.

Let's wrap things up by talking about a couple songs off the record. "Insult Like the Truth" really goes after things like ambition, control, pride and power.

This is probably my favorite song on the record. It is a total description of me, the contradictions in my own soul. I know that I can tend toward those directions in terms of reputation and ambition and the like, that's why I need to be confronted by the truth consistently. It gets to the heart of why I do what I do, something I'm always working through. When my dad died, I had to recognize that there was no person in my life who I was working for. And that was difficult, a difficult transition to make; that so much of my self-worth

was tied up in building a life that my father would admire. I guess, lately I've been real convinced of my need to be pouring God's Word into myself, just simply because of that.

Is "Lady Soul" your wife?

No, it's about Aretha Franklin.

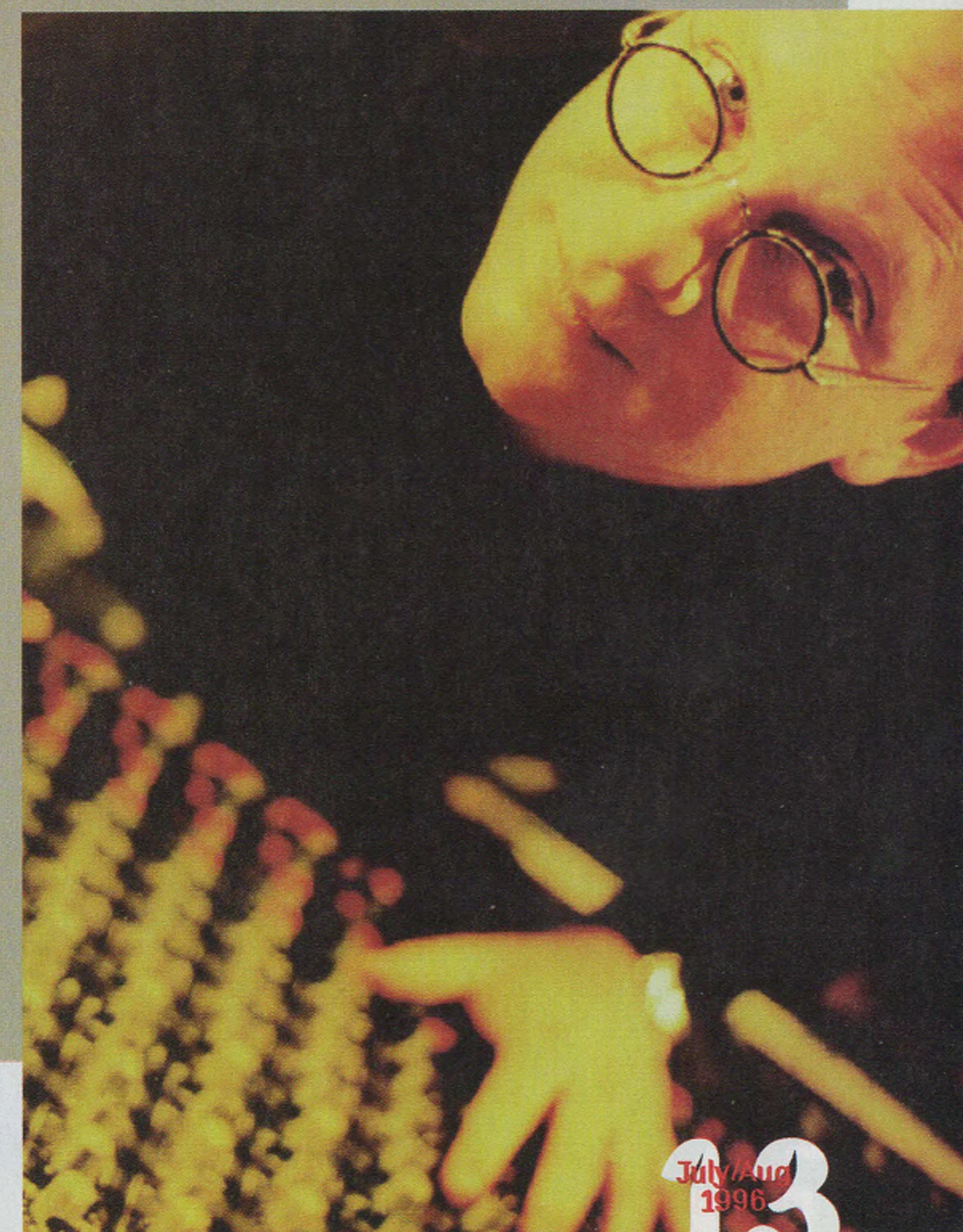
Oh, I assumed it was about your wife trying to drag you out of intellectualism.

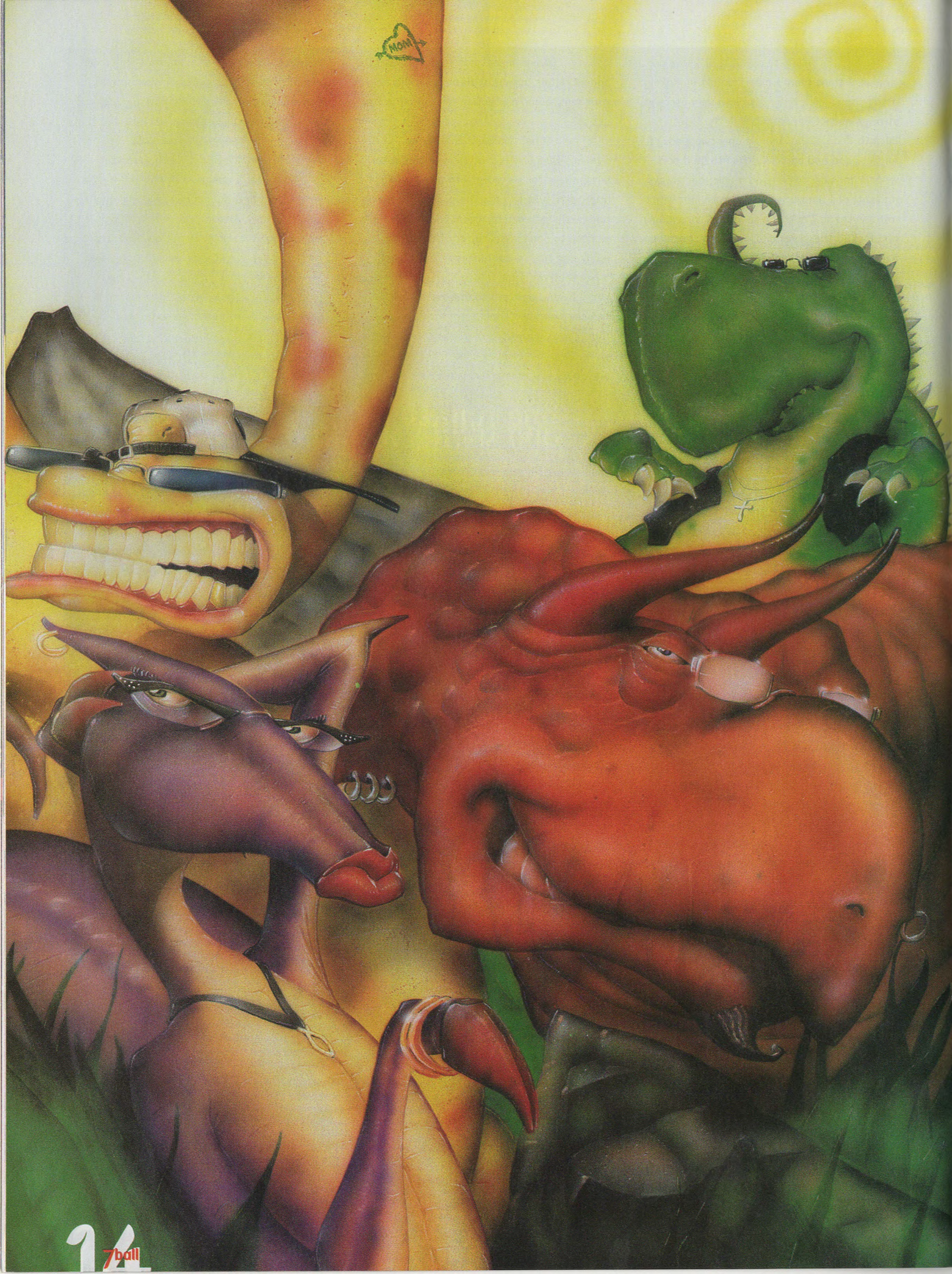
No, Aretha dragged me out. It's about allowing myself to not always have to be occupied in some kind of serious endeavor. Maybe I can get up in the morning, and instead of reading or working on some music, just bop around the living room a little bit to an old record that I like.

And, finally "Strange Language."

What the song is about in its core,

is that Christians do speak a language and have a certain understanding that is undeniably spiritual. This is something completely other than Christian-ese. It's certainly not you getting smarter or more brilliant, it's what God does when he changes us into the image of his Son. It's not 'strange' as in weird, I'm thinking of it as unusual, compelling, set apart. 7





NEVER SAY

By Brad Caviness
Illustration by Keith Locke

In the Michael Crichton epic *Jurassic Park*, scientists use DNA found in rocks to clone dinosaurs and then put them on display at a tropical island park. The dinosaurs run amok and wreak havoc on their creators.

On the Petra tribute *Never Say Dinosaur*, musicians clone rock songs from the veteran dinosaur rock band and display them for the record buying public. The alternative takes on Petra classic rock staples will wreak havoc with many listeners' perceptions of Petra and their music.

Most will be surprised to find that this is a modern rock album, with such guests as Plankeye, Sixpence None the Richer, Jars of Clay, MxPx and the Galactic Cowboys. The closest the record comes to Petra's brand of classic rock is the Walter Eugene's U2-inspired reading of "Judas Kiss." At the other end of the spectrum, the album also includes a song performed by Kevin Smith and Passafist that is not even a Petra song (more on that later).

Most surprising of all is the freshness and originality the artists manage to infuse into these songs, some of which are more than 20 years old. In the hands of young artists, songs that once seemed hopelessly dated, like "Yahweh Love," "Road to Zion" and "All the King's Horses," have new life.

It was these changes, however, that had Bob Hartman, Petra's leader and chief songwriter for the past 22 years, a little apprehensive when he was first approached about the project. "My first reaction to the tribute record was, 'Gee, does this mean we're supposed to quit now?' Usually, people are no longer around when something like this is done."

Once the songs were in, Hartman was pleased to discover that the project wasn't the musical equivalent of a Dean Martin roast. Indeed, he was flattered to have other artists want to pay tribute to his songs.

He was also curious how some went about picking their selection: "A few of them picked kind of odd-ball songs," he points out. "They're songs that don't stand out, I think, in the context of Petra's catalog. If you're asked to name a few old Petra songs, not too many people would think 'Pied Piper' or 'I Can Be Friends With You,' or even 'Wake Up,' which comes from our first record."

Most wouldn't have thought of "Louie's Solo," either. Because it's not a Petra song. Passafist's Dave Perkins and Lynn Nichols, both of whom have long histories in Christian music, not only performed on *Never Say Dinosaur*, but worked behind the scenes to put the project together.

"The thing that we got excited most about," Perkins says, "was the possibility for new bands and bands that were far, far away stylistically from Petra, to be involved and maybe come up with a record that is really timely as far as the musical expression goes. And at the end of the day, I think we proved to be successful."

But success was a challenge for Perkins, who was not overly familiar with Petra's music before starting the project. And when they convened with Steve Taylor (their former partner from the band Chagall Guevarra), they found all of their favorite songs had already been taken and the trio couldn't agree on any of the remaining numbers. "We had kind of

given up and decided not to do one," Perkins says. "Lynn and Steve were talking and I was looking at the back of Petra's live album and saw this listing for 'Louie's Solo.' I pretty much knew what it was, so I said, 'Hey, here's a song we could do!'"

By the time it came to recording, however, Taylor was consumed with producing for the Newsboys and had to bow out. In his place stepped dc Talk's Kevin Smith, who had worked with Perkins and Nicholls on "Lonely Moon" for the late Mark Heard's tribute album, *Strong Hand of Love*.

Petra's track called "Louie's Solo" is Louie Weaver's drum solo from their 1986 live record. Passafist's track called "Louie's Solo" contains two samples from the original, plus several other instruments, melodies, chord changes and even lyrics.

In fact, the words are like few—if any—you'd find in the Petra catalog. Perkins drew a lot of inspiration from the essays of philosopher Montaigne and Greek and Roman mythology to single out Weaver (who has been in Petra's touring company longer than any other current member) as the unsung hero of the band.

"When I went to write a lyric, I just swept up a bunch of junk in my arms and created a generally fictitious story line that in some ways is very campy and in other ways just tries to pay tribute to a guy who was along for the ride and lived to tell the tale."

More conventional and no less musically stimulating is Sixpence None the Richer's "primitive groove" adaptation of "Road to Zion." Sixpence guitarist Matt Slocum says the band played on *Never Say Dinosaur* partly to get the chance to work with producer Brent Bourgeois (who also produced Jars of Clay's resplendent "Rose Colored Stained Glass Windows"). But they also pay homage to one of the first Christian acts Slocum became familiar with.

"I remember listening to Petra back in middle school and going to a couple of concerts with the church youth group," he says. "When they were just starting up, a lot of people thought 'Christian rock' was an oxymoron, that there was no such thing. A lot of church people thought 'Christian rock' was evil. You could say Petra helped usher in that belief that Christian rock wasn't evil, that it's just another way of praising God. They broke down a lot of walls for a lot of other musicians."

Similarly, Monty Colvin of mainstream metal band Galactic Cowboys recognized Petra as being one of the bands responsible for taking Christian rock to a bigger platform. They were one of the first, he says, to have an elaborate stage show that could more easily compete with their mainstream counterparts.

Hartman comments on Petra's legacy: "What I hope it is more than anything else, is that we're an uncompromising band with uncompromising music and an uncompromising message. There's no getting around that a lot of these new young artists in Christian music were coming up as kids listening to Petra. To them I say, 'Thank you. I'm honored.'"

Leaving anonymity behind would be good, but the members of Black Eyed Sceva are not interested in quick fixes. To them, their musical career is about "slow growth": Growing as artists, growing as a working band, and growing as Christians. And if they aren't overnight pop sensations, then it just goes with the territory. It certainly helped their cause touring with Sixpence None the Richer, last spring. It put Sceva in touch with modern pop fans who expect something more interesting than the usual. The next step for Black Eyed Sceva (pronounced "see-va," taken from Acts 19) is their brand-new EP *5 Years, 50,000 Miles Davis*, which includes new studio tracks, live tracks and a cover of the Police classic "Invisible Sun."

The choice of the Police song seems especially appropriate, for several reasons. First, it could be the most Evangelical song a non-Christian will ever write. Second, Sting's thoughtful lyrics are exactly the sort the members of Sceva hope to emulate. Third, the Police was a three-piece outfit that went through a bit of slow growth, too. They weren't pop stars overnight, you know.

While the name is still new to many, Black Eyed Sceva has been around for five years—hence, the first part of the EP's title. In fact, they were a band for more than three years before they recorded their first record. "Those were slow growth years," says vocalist/guitarist Jeremy Post, of their start in Santa Barbara. "They were important to help us build that firm foundation. We know guys who got signed before they ever played a gig; that is so tough. We went through so much junk as a band. I'm glad we went through those times as a band and God kept us together. Now, when we hit trials on the roads, we know it's not that big a deal. There are very few things that phase us."

Something that does phase them—maybe a little—is that some listeners seem to think the boys in Sceva are eggheads. "I always think it's interesting when people say that," Post says. "I didn't

realize until the other day that people thought we were more intelligent than maybe we really are. It's not like we're stretching ... we don't open our dictionaries or something. I don't know, we just happen to read some good books. We're just writing songs about our lives, and Christ has made the biggest impact on our lives, so He definitely shines through our songs. We want to write them intelligently."

Their rootsy rock also has some unexpected twists in the time and chord structures: Once, Sixpence None the Richer drummer Dale Baker pointed out to me Sceva's time signatures—I couldn't possibly repeat the formula from memory, but it sounded pretty important. Turns out, the band didn't even think about it themselves until Baker pointed it out to them.

"We just go with what sounds good," Post says. "One of our rules was the song had to be interesting before we put words to it."

Bass player Brad McCarter agrees: "The music should stand alone. It should be interesting even if there were no words over it. There are enough bands playing three-chord stuff."

"It's taken until we toured with Sixpence to figure out what time signatures the songs were in," drummer Brent Nims says. "Dale was real happy to help us figure it out. He was pretty excited about that." He observes, joking, "We tend

to have fewer problems with moshing, because it's hard to catch the groove,"

Nims jokes. "It is encouraging to hear musicians pick up on it and say, 'hey, that's cool.' Usually, people say, 'hey, that's wrong.'"

They work equally on making their lyrics meaningful. Songs like "Justified" and "Way Before the Flood" take obvious Scriptural starting-points, but find new twists that make listeners think about their faith more realistically. Then there's "Adrian James," a live track on the new EP, a song about an absentee father which contains the brilliantly honest line, "sometimes I wonder if I could ever grow to love anyone like him."

It's the sort of stuff that challenges listeners to grapple with their faith with wisdom. But it doesn't sell many records. I wonder aloud, half-jokingly, if maybe they should think about selling out. You know, trick people into liking their music.

Black Eyed Sceva

BY CHRIS WELL

"The good thing is we don't want to be huge," McCarter says, amused. "There's no glory in getting people to like something that you wrote that you don't even like. We're not

going to sit and write a four-chord song with a great melody just for the sake of getting people to like us. We only want those people to like us who like what we do." He says they

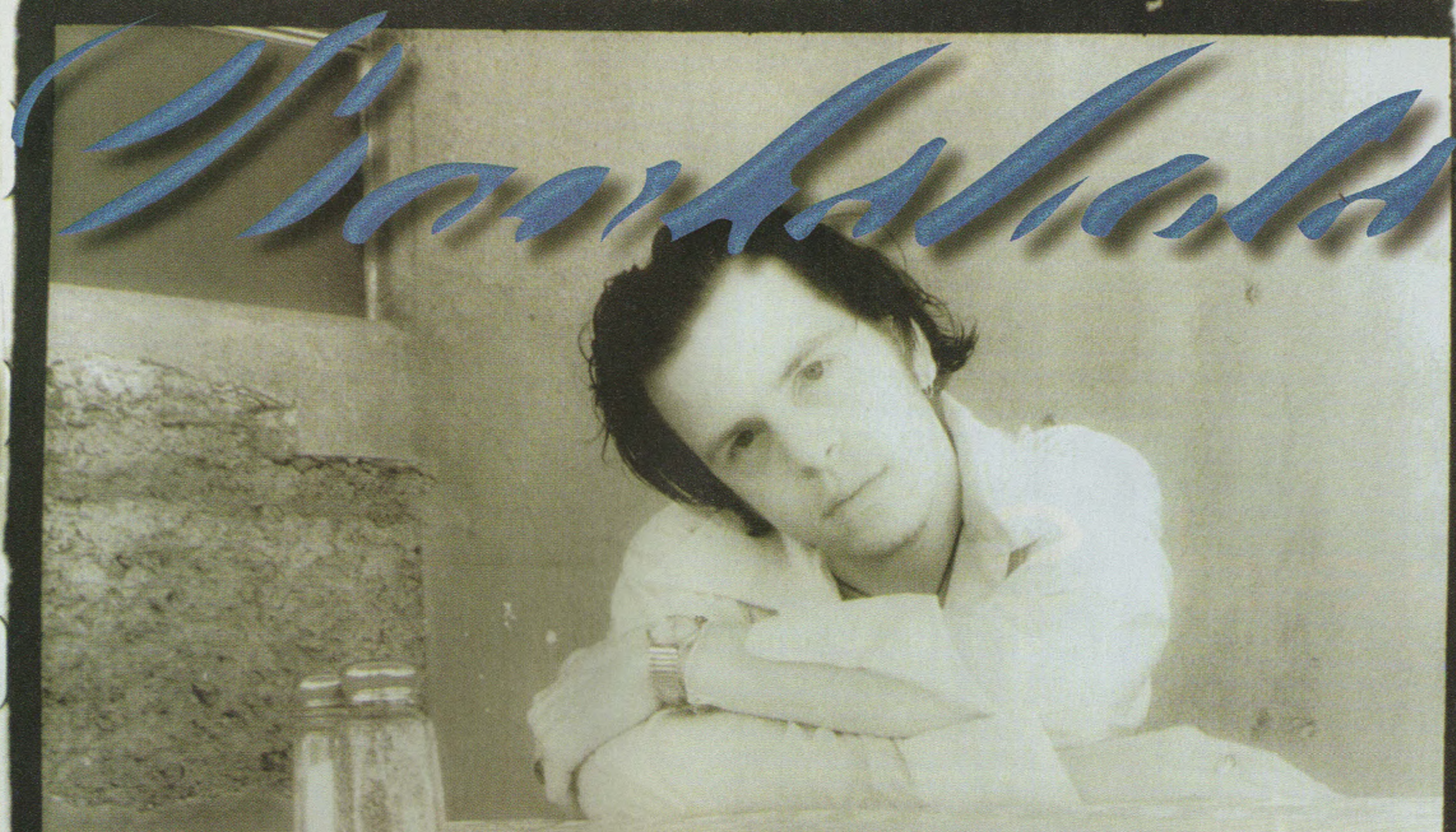
never expected to find instant stardom. "We may have a small audience, but they're very devoted. They know all the songs and they think about things and they ask us questions. We'd rather have that, even if it means making less money. We'd rather have a good audience than a huge, unthinking audience."

Those who have come out to see Sceva have also had the chance to participate in a specific ministry: Last Spring, their label records put together a tour package called "Buy the Land/Build the House/Feed the Kids," where part of your ticket price went specifically to help needy kids in Tijuana, Mexico. "It's a unique tour in that sense, and we're proud to be involved in it," McCarter adds. "We're proud to let people know what's happening with the tour, that it's not just another show."

"We all feel it's really important," Nims says.

Post says the members of Sceva want their ministry to have a concrete purpose. "If God can use us to speak to them from the stage, that's great, we've done something good. If they can take the music home and it ministers to them, that's great as well. But if this money is going toward this house that is going to tangibly help kids every day, so much the better. And it's not something we build and then we get the heck out of there."

Their record label, Five Minute Walk, relies on a small church in Concord, California (Sanctuary Ministries), for accountability. Consequently, the ministry will continue—food and clothes will be available regularly. "It's well thought out," Post says. "If we're going to call this 'Christian music,' then it should be doing something 'Christ-like.'"



"My life has been pretty crazy for the past two years," explains Clay about the circumstances that have led to his solo record. He slipped into alcohol abuse and became difficult and even mean to his closest friends. This resulted in him losing his wife, and losing the privilege to see his stepson. "I woke up one day and that was just it—they were gone." He also drove away most of his friends. "Then, for a couple of months in my life, I did things that I'd never done—you know, I was drinking and smoking, and just crazy stuff. For the last year and a half, I've been just trying to get my life together."

When I met with Kevin Clay—for-merly of the band My Little Dog China—the articulate, soft-spoken man with the friendly smile and hesitant laugh looked nothing like the troubled soul he described to me. His new solo project, produced by Mike Knott (a spiri-tual soul brother for Clay if there ever was one), documents how a cre-ative artist can fall away from God in such a pub-lic and pitiful manner, and yet still return to the peace and grace of the Almighty's love. When these cataclysmic changes took place, Clay reacted by retreating from music, getting involved in church and ministry. However, the artist in him soon reappeared, which led him from the basement of his par-ents' home in Columbia, Missouri, to the record-ing studio in far away southern California.

Clay now hopes to remove himself from the image he'd created in My Little Dog China. "Onstage, the trap I found myself in was that it was so personal and intense. I was just screaming and falling and slamming my body on the ground. I gave everything. It becomes a trap, though, because no matter how happy or peaceful you are during the day, or however you feel, you must go relive that. I believe it's the role of certain artists to do that, but you have to be really stable to do it." Clay soon learned he was not destined to be such an artist.

In a sense, the music that My Little Dog China made was an artistic presentation of "living for the moment." Clay hopes the music he makes now will still have the urgency of the moment—and also have a long life after that moment's passed. He

Kevin Clay

By Dan Macintosh

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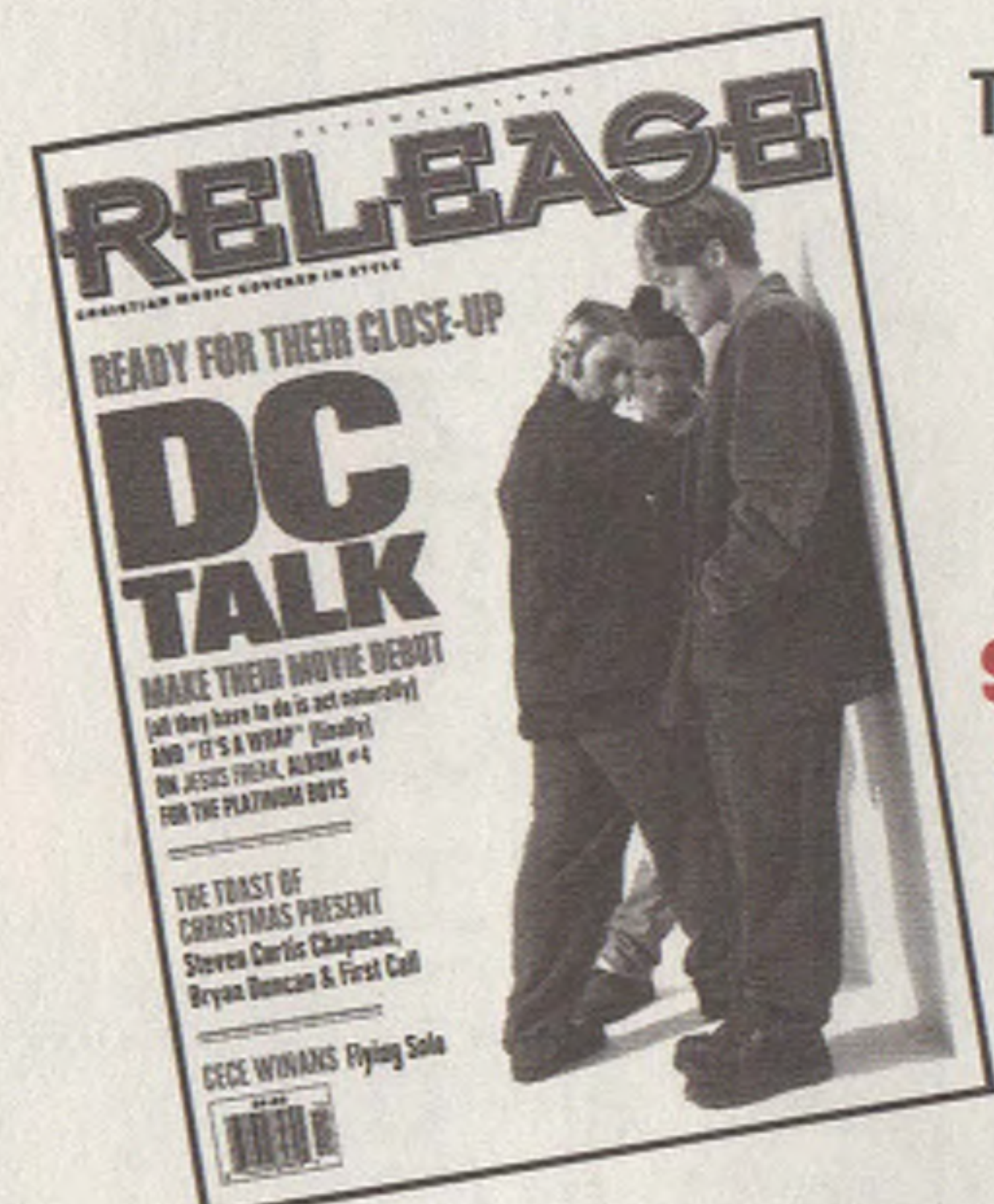
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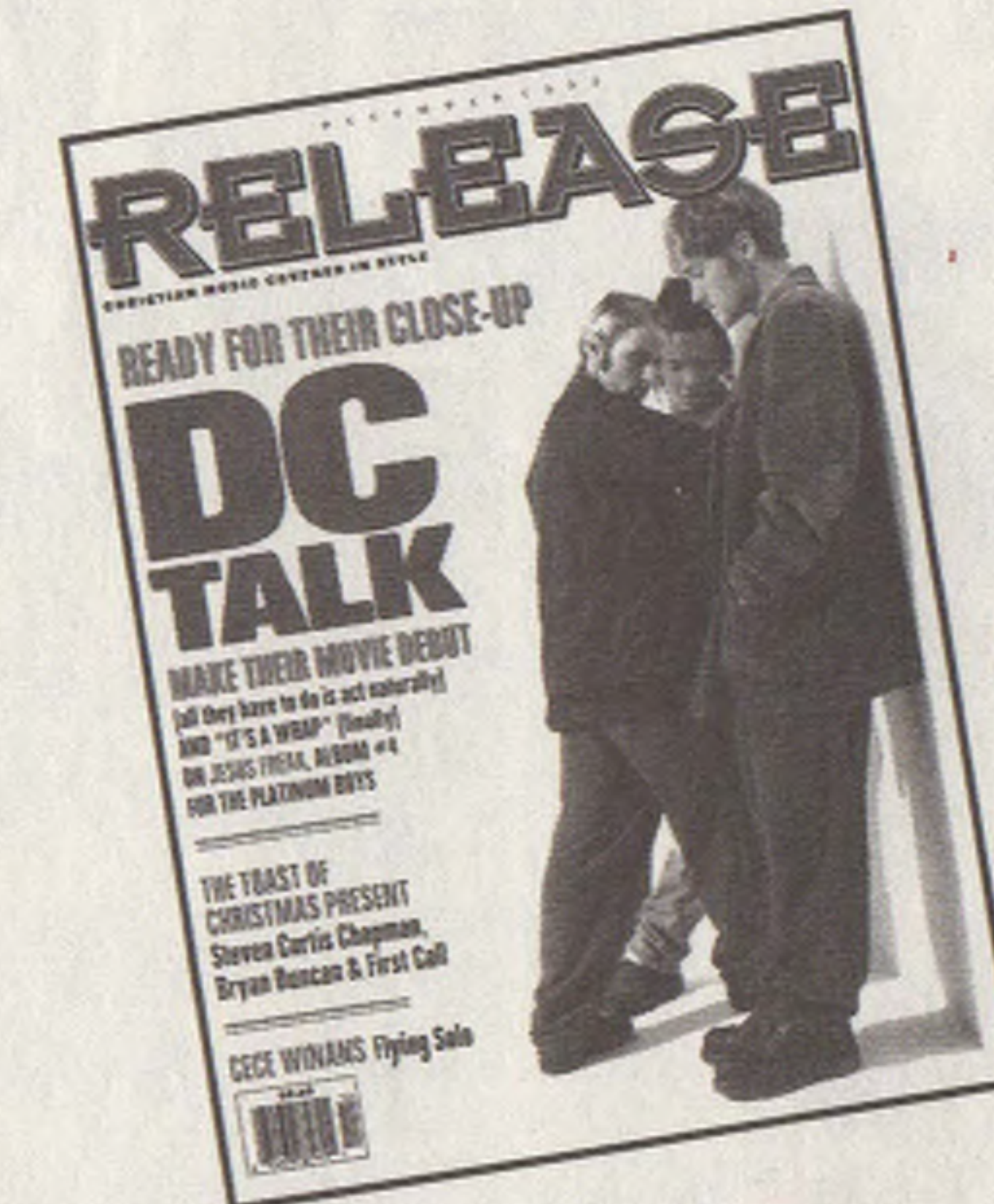
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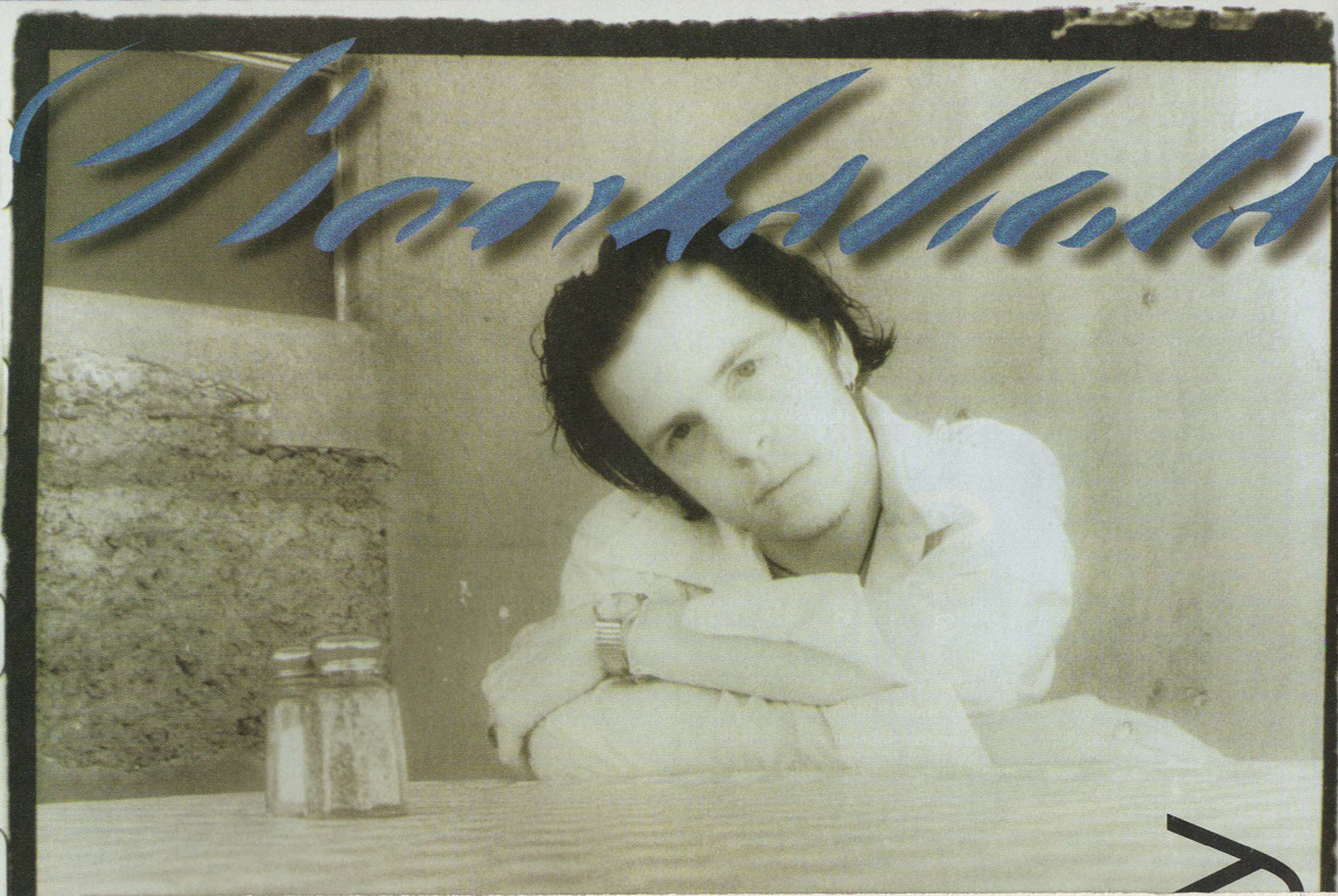


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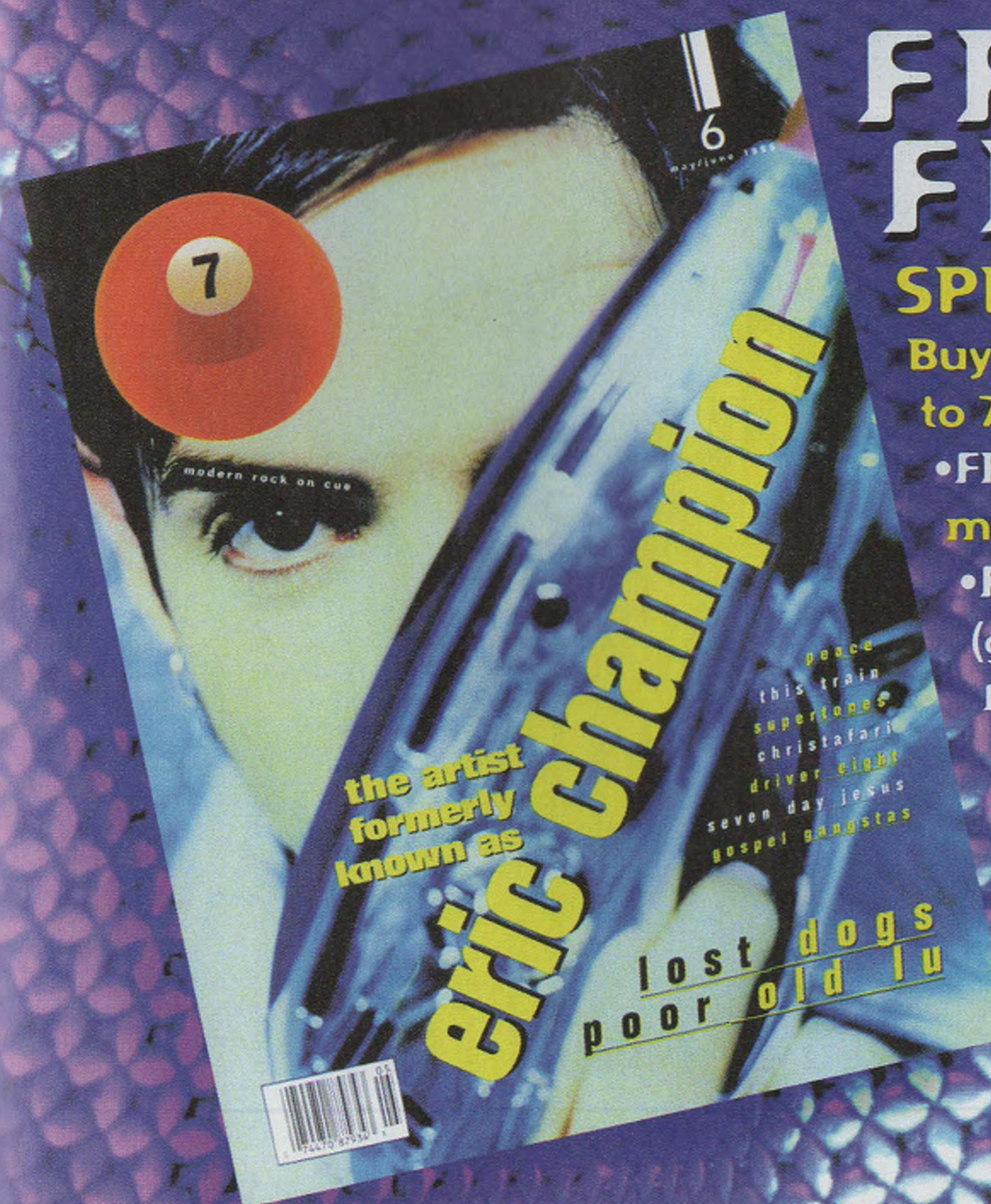
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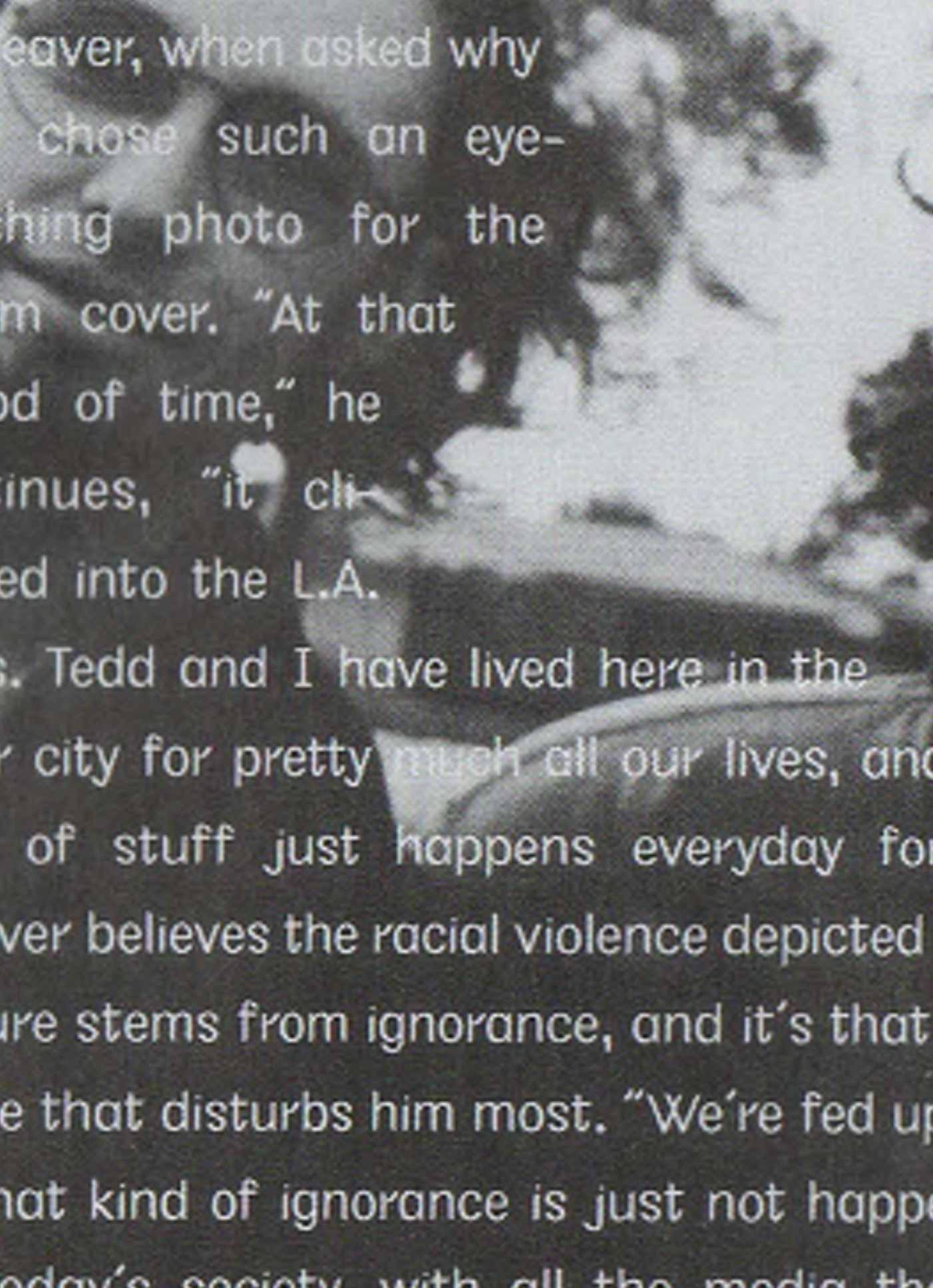
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There is nothing routine about the

Every Day Life is a four-piece group which will remind some of Rage Against the Machine for their anger and purpose, and The Beastie Boys for their careful mixture of rap and rock. Based in Southern California—the land of riots and racially significant highly publicized murder trials—for many on the streets, Every Day Life accurately paints pictures of how day to day life is for the less fortunate.

"Acts of violence like that go on every-

By Dan Macintosh



days," comments guitarist Carl Weaver, when asked why they chose such an eye-catching photo for the album cover. "At that period of time," he continues, "it climaxed into the L.A. Riots. Tedd and I have lived here in the inner city for pretty much all our lives, and that kind of stuff just happens everyday for us." Weaver believes the racial violence depicted in the picture stems from ignorance, and it's that ignorance that disturbs him most. "We're fed up with it. That kind of ignorance is just not happening. In today's society, with all the media that we have, we should be able to educate ourselves not to go that way."

"I think one of the things we realized

about the name Every Day Life,"

explains Cookerly, "is that although it's a very small and quaint name, it encompasses the extremes. If one person wakes up and stubs their toe, that was their everyday life. Kids come to our show, break up with their boyfriends and girlfriends all the time, and that's part of their every day lives. The picture on our album cover is one particular instance that was such an extreme out of one person's everyday life—it seemed more than fitting, I think."

The group's sound—which seems explosive and spontaneous—has actually been well thought out. "One of the ideas I had for Every Day Life musically," comments Weaver, "was to just kind of encompass everything a person could hear on the radio at any given time—you know, pop, rap, r&b, hip hop, rock & roll, heavy metal, the whole thing. We did the best we could with the instruments we have, but it took a while to gel."

Soul food n. Food, as ham hocks and collard greens, traditionally eaten by southern American blacks (The American Heritage Dictionary, Boston, 1982).

No, Soulfood 76 is not a chain of southern black cookshacks, so forget all the connotations of ethnic cuisine the moniker might conjure up. Think of it as "Food for the Soul," because this Seattle band is not pushing pigs' feet and chitlins. Neither is it dishing up grunge, as the number in their name betrays their '70s guitar rock roots and captures the spirit of '76.

Influences of Led Zeppelin, Lenny Kravitz and Jimi Hendrix are found on the band's label debut, *Original Soundtrack*, on Freedom Records. Not to be confused with 10cc's 1975 album of the same name (remember "I'm Not in Love"?), it features the electric piano and unique vocal style of Daniel Fairbanks, the heavy retro-riffs of guitarist Sam Ericsson, and the solid rhythm section of Paul Mumaw (drums) and Kevin "Whitey" Stainer (bass). The album is more than just a blast from your (or your parents') past. It might even be the soundtrack from the film of your life. Fairbanks illuminates, "In your relationship with God and in your struggle with everyday life, you might have that inevitable fear of rejection that everybody seems to have." The band just wanted to bring some of that out in its songs and address other real problems, such as loneliness and alienation.

7 plate or by the disc.

Interesting enough, Freedom Records is a subsidiary of Malaco Records, a black gospel and blues company that also—no joke—owns a chain of restaurants. It is unknown whether they serve soul food, either by the

there.” The guys are unabashedly frank about their limited musical ability (“Individually, we’re not that great, but as a group we click,” confesses Munawar), but when you mix it all up this band has the right ingredients.

It just had feel and depth. You could sense that there were possibilities

Fairbanks got the idea for the vintage feel of the cover art from Curtis Mayfield's *Superfly* album from 1972. The band liked the concept so well they carried the vibe into their video from the first single, "Huggy Bear," a yellowy tinted clip shot on 16mm.

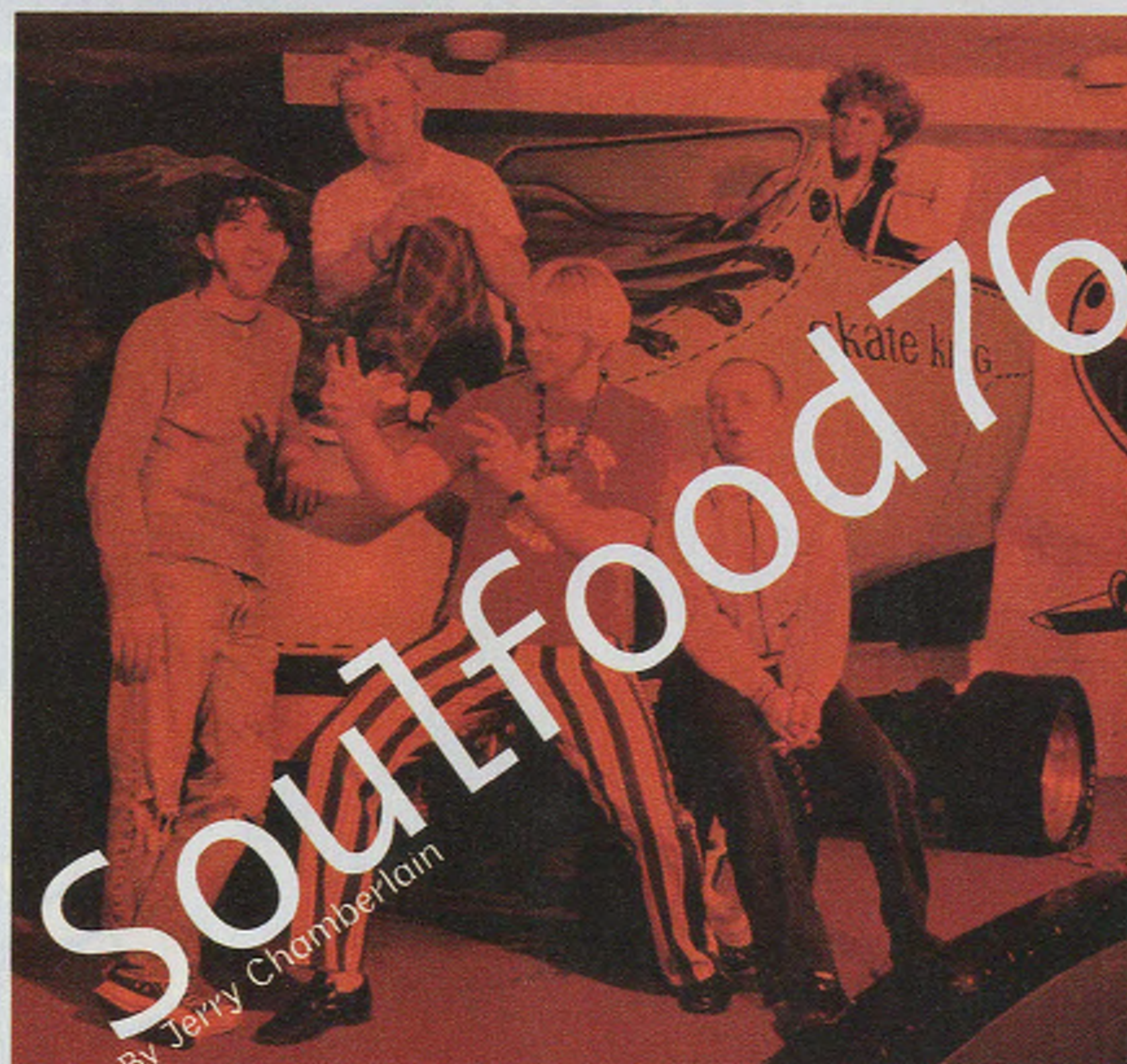
Seattle neighbor Aaron Sprinkle, of Poor Old Lu, produced Original Soundtrack. "We've known him forever," Fairbanks declares.

"Since he was in diapers," Mumaw cracks. That wasn't that long ago, right? "Ooh, I'm glad you said that."

Two and a half years ago saw the Soulfood 76 independent CD *Velour*, also produced by Sprinkle (as was their first demo), which Mumaw says had more of a '60s sound: "All the drums rang out a lot and there were tons of guitar tracks. It was a little bit more upbeat, too."

Ericsson adds, "But, then again, *Velour* was also kinda in the league of us having a revival, so all the songs were praise songs, which is rare."

SF76 has gone through some musical changes in its four years of exis-



Clarna Records

Every Day Life Poor Old Lu a few loose screws

once you check in... you'll never want to leave

It doesn't take too long into a conversation with Chris Scott for the average Joe to figure out he's probably outmatched. Scott, the mastermind (and voice) behind new modern rock outfit Blackball, is working towards a philosophy major at El Camino Community College in Northern California and it's obvious he's done his homework.

"Everything people believe is based on a certain philosophy," Scott says. "I look at everything through the lens of the Word. I love to read different things, but I have a standard by which I can measure to see whether they're true or false."

Scott is a soft-spoken, yet opinionated 28-year-old, with the intelligence to back it up. Some will recognize him as frontman for hard rock band Precious Death. Blackball, which takes the hard rock route into more modern rock pastures, was birthed out of Scott's need to explore different avenues than those created with P.D.

For the Blackball debut *Super Heavy Dreamscape*, Scott joined with fellow churchgoers Tom Barber (bass guitar) and Lorenzo Mauro (drums) while playing most of the guitars, as

well as performing all of the vocals. Precious Death guitarist David Bishop guested guitar on four tunes. Scott says the record is his most personal work to date.

"I didn't dig this deep into myself with Precious Death. When you're working in such close conjunction with other artists, it's really hard for it to be an expression of your own self."

He also found himself changing many of the musical details, especially in the vocal approach. "You just have to sing different with a Precious Death song than you can with a Blackball song," he says. "The styles are so different, the sound is so different, the players are so different. If I was to sing in Blackball the way I sing in Precious Death, it would stink."

Even with a different band that has a different lyrical and musical approach, Scott says Blackball's concept of ministry will run parallel to the one he's held, regardless of the group he happens to be with on the road.

"I've always felt that no rock band is a ministry," he says. "It's the people within a band that have to be the ministers, because the word 'ministry' basically means serving and giving. That's never going to change."



Blackball

By Chad Bonham

B A N K S H O T S

When Believable Picnic first began work in the recording studio, the experience was pretty, well, unbelievable. The fun started for the new rock trio within the cozy confines of a Mexican restaurant turned recording studio. That's where bassist/vocalist Jason Burkham had cranked his bass amp to 10 in an effort to maximize the sound quality. And while he claims it wasn't that loud outside, it was just enough to spark a militant response from one of the studio's elderly, but feisty neighbors.

"There was a nice little lady that lived across the street and she didn't appreciate us," guitarist/vocalist Jade Hanson says. "She came over and told us so, and she wrote a letter to the Franklin (Tennessee) Chief of Police."

The new legendary letter referred to the bands as "disrespectful, arrogant, greedy, pony-tailed hotshots" and threatened to have their hides tanned and videotaped by the local TV news crew for "anticipated court action." And who was going to do the honors you ask? Why, the Hooper Lane Gang, of course, consisting of 86-year-old Uncle Joe Robinson, Momma Carol, designated hit man Big Sandy Hall and Miss Ethel and Moe.

"It's one of the biggest jokes in the Franklin Police Department," Burkham says. "Lawyers around town are getting copies of it and our engineer went to a studio in downtown

Nashville and saw a framed copy hanging on the wall."

Believable Picnic moved its operations to a second studio in order to finish the second half of its debut album without serious altercation, but the Hooper Lane Gang made such an impact, it even receives mention in "The Lion's Den," one of the debut project's ten tracks.

The band got its start when Hanson, the older brother of PFR frontman Joel Hanson, caught a taste of life as a rock musician, after spending time on the road with his brother's band. Hanson and drummer Jeff Bridges soon began working on a demo while searching for a bass player.

At the same time, Burkham had befriended PFR while living in Minnesota and consequently learned about Hanson's musical endeavors. A late-night phone call to Hanson and the risky move to Nashville that ensued was just crazy enough to land Burkham a spot in the band. Two years later, Believable Picnic



Believable Picnic

By Chad Bonham

was signed.

The plan now is to take their hip brand of hard-edged guitar pop and play in front of as many different audiences as possible. "We definitely want to work with youth groups, and let them know that there's more to Christian music than what they're familiar with," Hanson says. "But when we started this band, our main goal was to get out there and play for people who don't know Christ."

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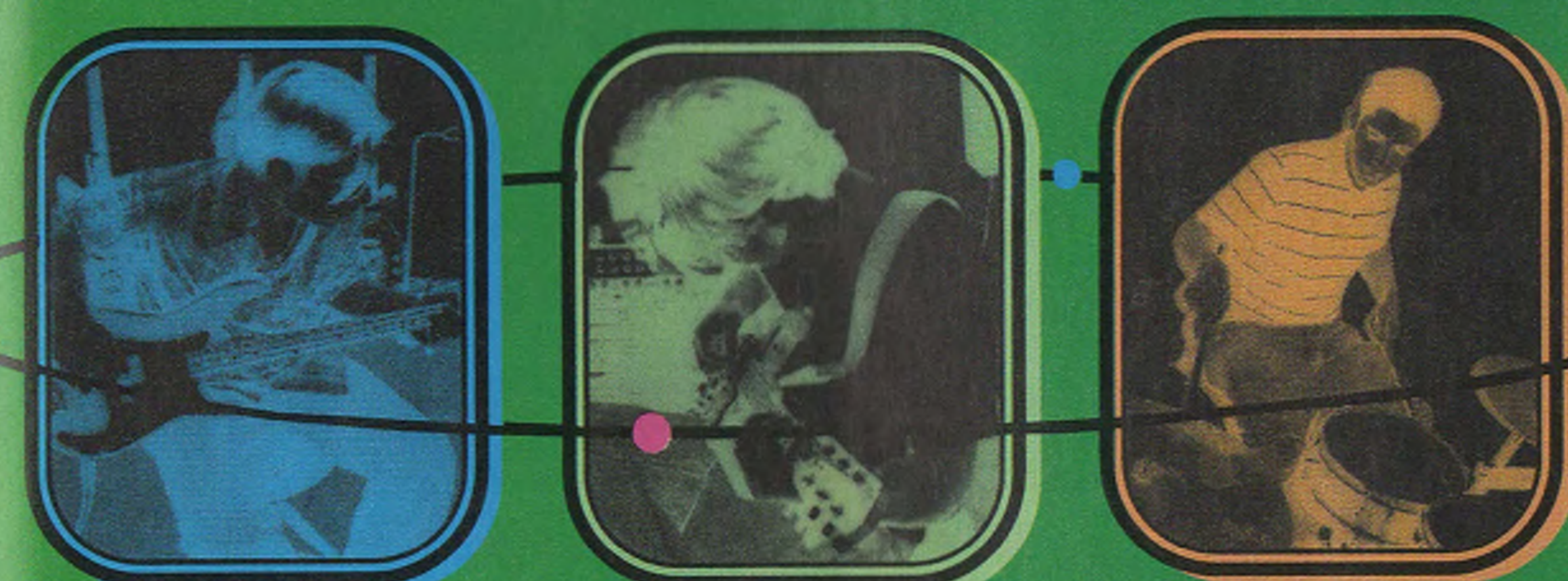


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When Manchester, England's pop/dance machine World Wide Message Tribe was putting together their latest release, *We Don't Get What We Deserve*, they ran into something of a creative block. "We'd had about three months recording this project to go. We had three songs done and we didn't like any of them," Andy "Heavyfoot" Hawthorne says. "So we were not happy men."

Fortunately, because of the band's ministry in high schools, the band has about 200 people committed to praying at least an

hour for the band every week. "We were so worried that we were wasting our record company's money, so we called these people to pray. The day after that we got a little tape in the post and it was a tape of a guy named Duncan Campbell, who was the evangelist at the heart of the Scottish Hebridian Revival. We wrote a track about him on our first album. We listened to this tape as a matter of interest and were so excited about this amazing love of God. We started talking to each other and said, 'Wouldn't it be great to put this on a track?'"

Producer Zarc Porter sampled the Scottish evangelist talking in his monotone about the most amazing move of God in 1949. "We just got excited, as we listened to the track, as we thought again about revival and the amazing possibility of revival coming to Manchester. We just got fired up. On the back of all these people's prayers, it was like everything fell into place."

The aim of the Tribe is to write songs that are stylistically six months ahead of what's then on the charts. True to form, *We Don't Get What We Deserve* includes many current styles in European dance music.

With their keen music sense, World Wide Message Tribe has quickly become one of the major bands in the European Christian music scene. However, their idea of touring is a little different than you would expect: Week after week, the Tribe can be found in high schools all over Manchester, sharing the good news of Jesus in weeklong missions through assemblies, lessons and lunch concerts. Every week up to 40 or 50 kids get saved. The kids are then linked with local churches.

Porter says most of their songs relate to their work in schools. "All the topics on the album are aimed to school kids. We're saying things in very simple ways. We always do songs like 'We Talk to the Lord' that have almost ridiculously simple hooks, which kids can pick up on the first listen. Kids are already walking up the corridor, shouting it back. Those are the kind of things we are really keen on developing that hopefully they can remember after a week."

Worldwide Message Tribe

By Jan Vink

You would think a band name like Cloud Merchants would be followed by a long-winded explanation of things deeply theological, right? Not exactly. After kicking around in the San Diego music scene with the name, O.N.E., a couple of years ago, bassist David Ybarra decided "the name needed a change. We went through the typical band follies of trying to call yourself something totally unique. The two words just popped up and after a while it did bring some meaning. Everybody gets a great connotation out of the word, 'cloud.'"

The Merchants admit they owe a debt to early '80s bands such as INXS, Tears for Fears and U2. When alternative music made its way to local San Diego radio stations, they were impressed by not only the music, but also, "a really good spirit of exchanging a lot of different ideas," Ybarra says. "You just threw the rules out the door and did what you felt was right and nobody could take that away from you." Lead vocalist Michael Van Eik chimes in, "Everything was different. That music was just so powerful."

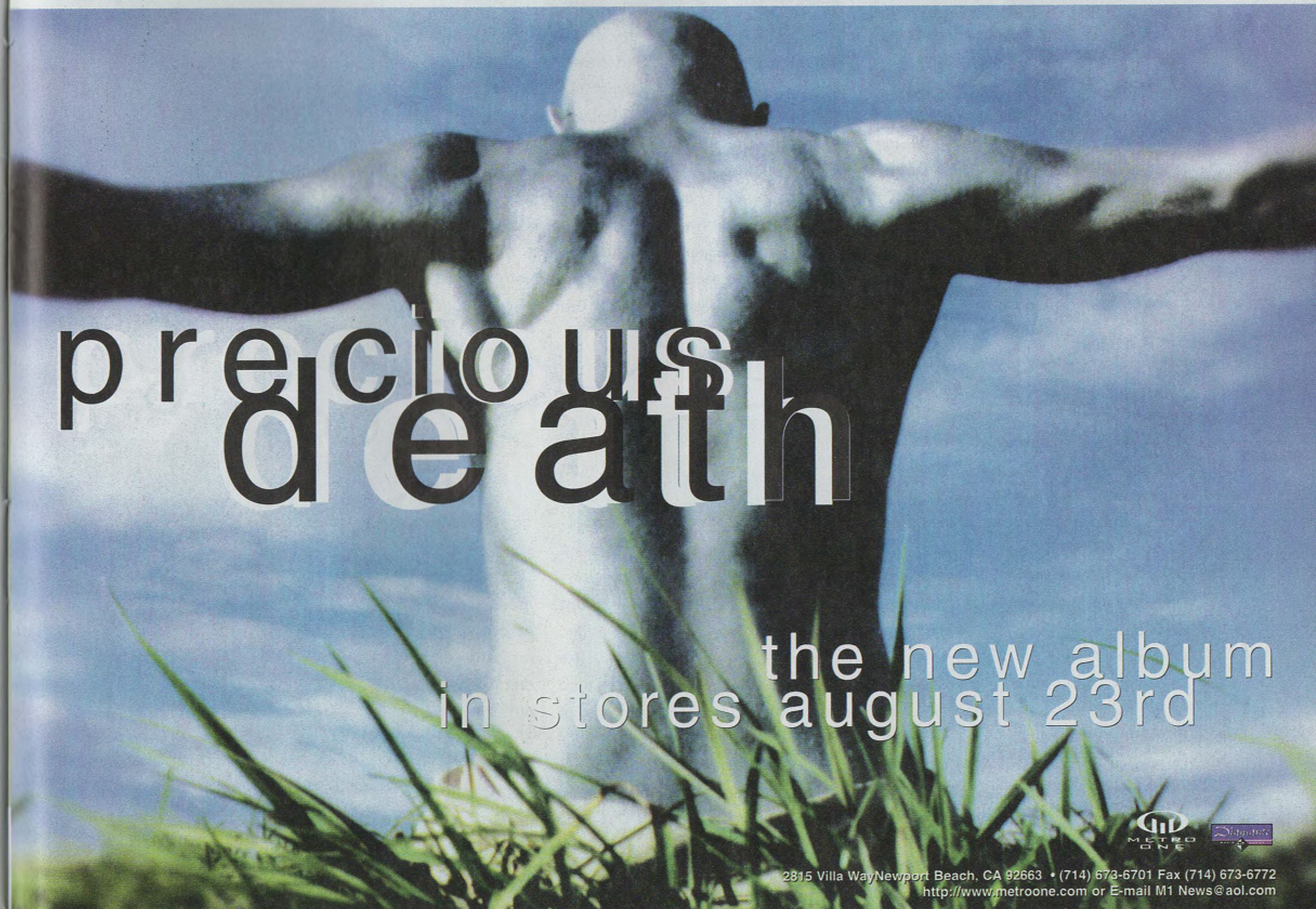
Where many bands choose to focus their ministry on either the church or clubs,

guitarist Robert Evans says the members of Cloud Merchants hope to have it both ways: "We want to try and focus our skills as we can and play both clubs and churches. We want to be ministry minded, yet try to be just as good and competitive as bands on the radio. To say that we specifically want to play only churches or clubs would be just a portion of the whole picture."



Cloud Merchants

By Dave Bumgarner



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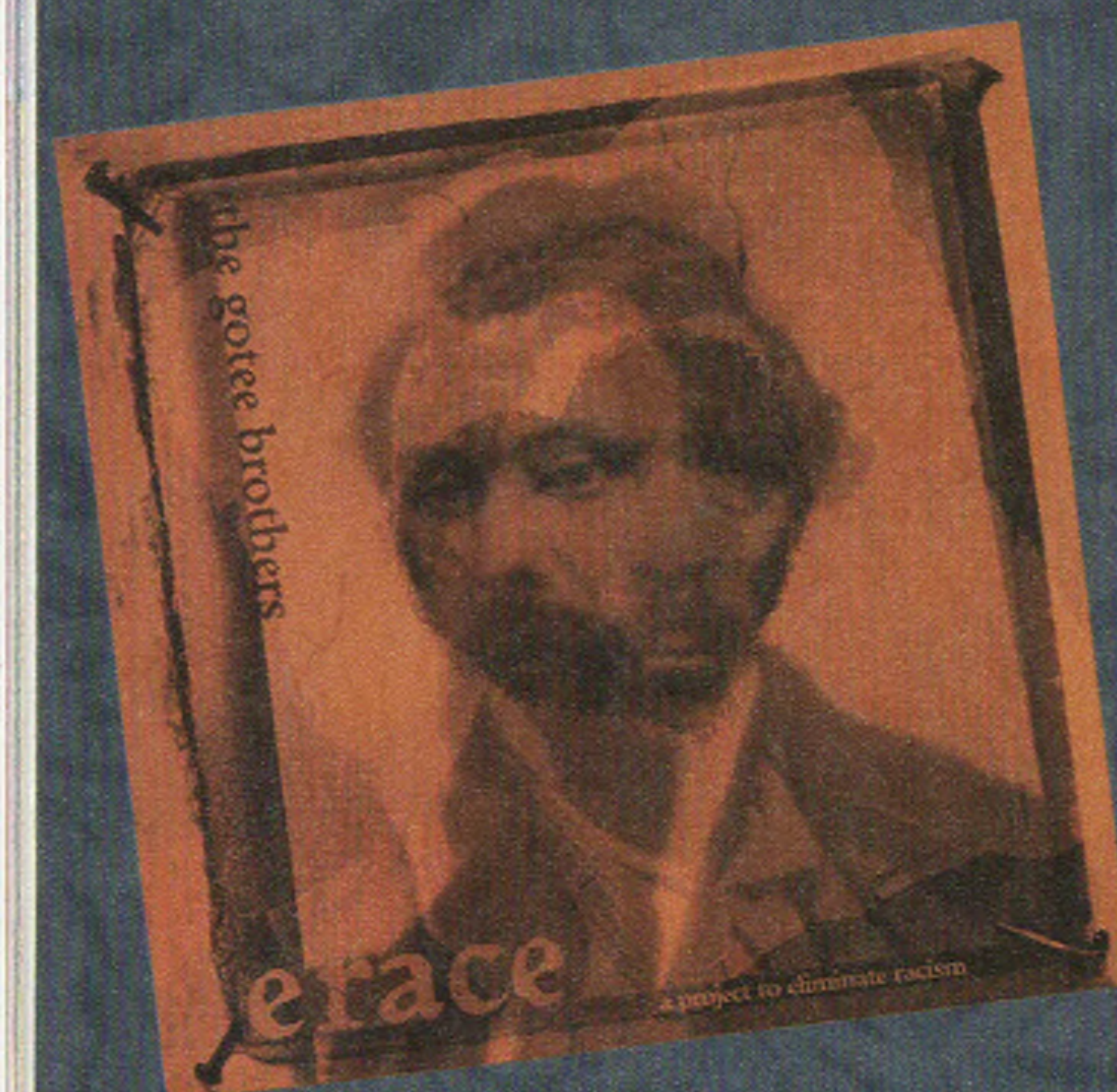
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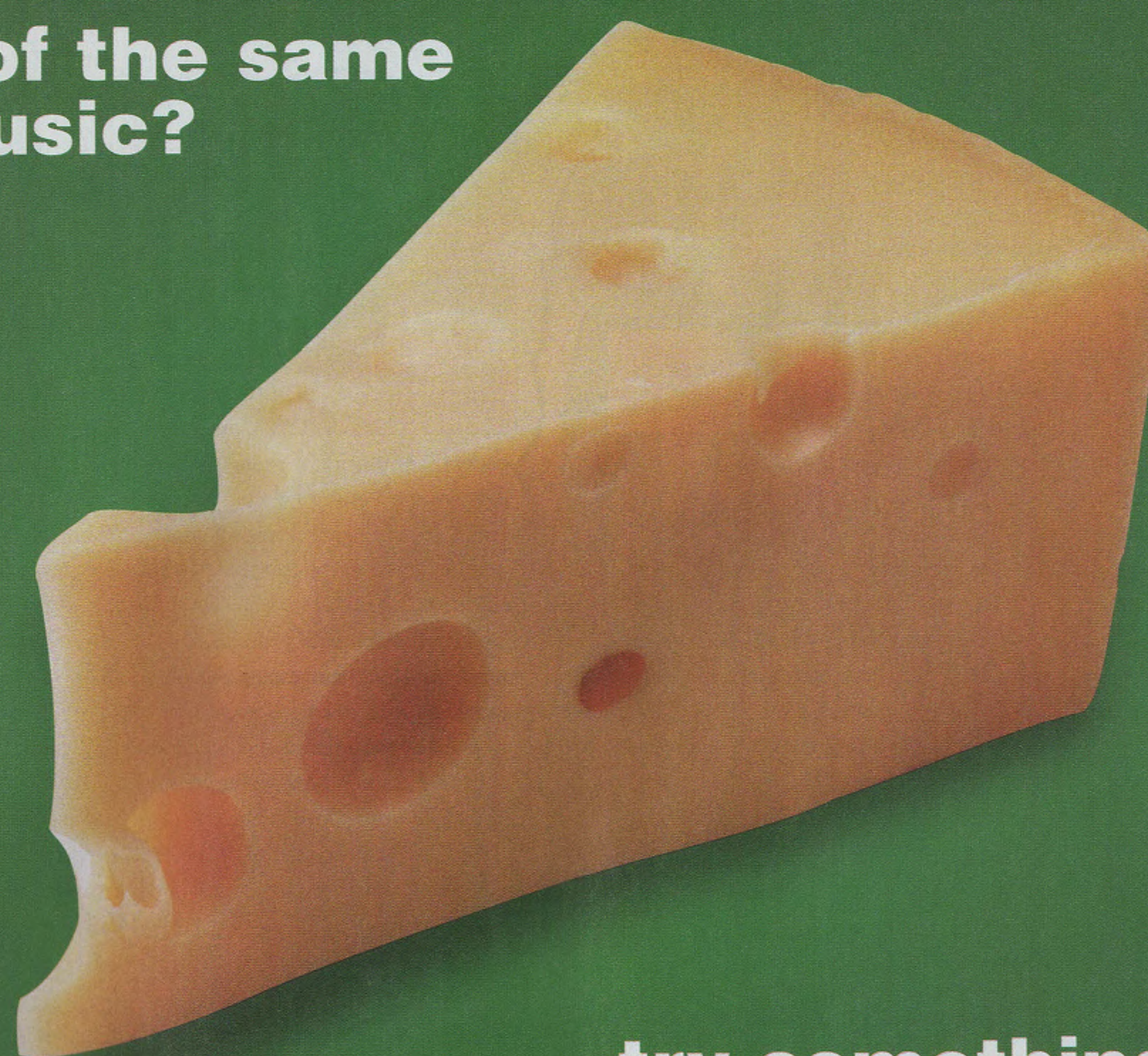


Reviews

by Frank and his monkey

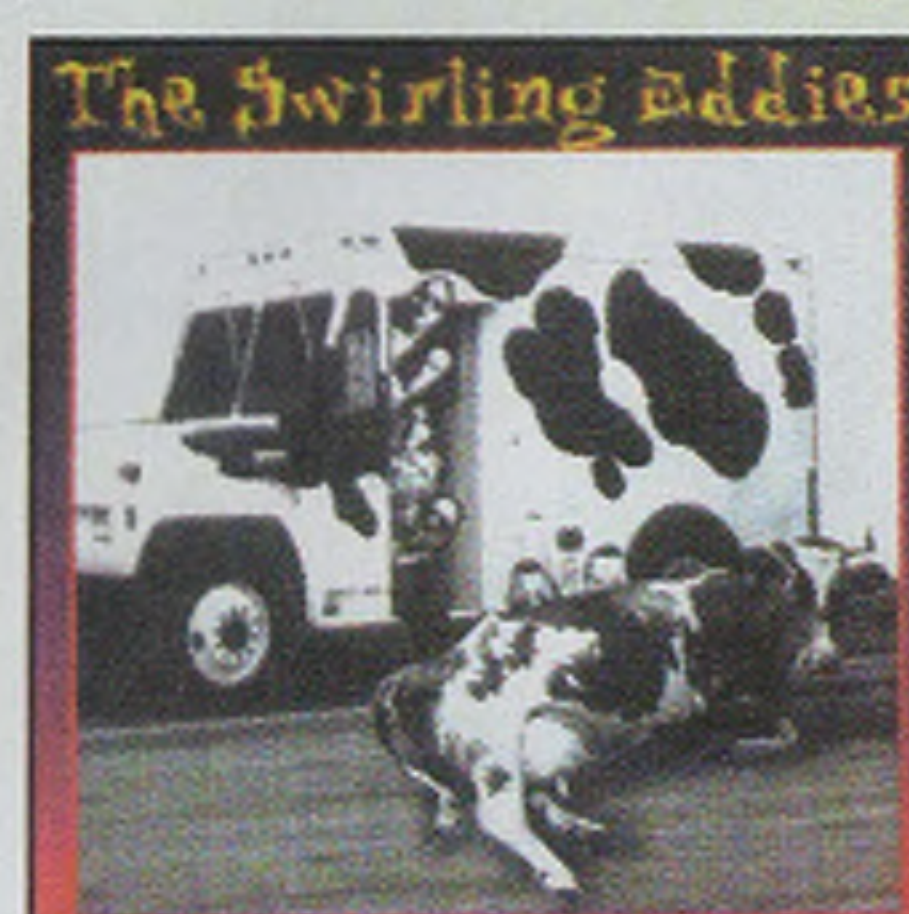


tired of the same old music?

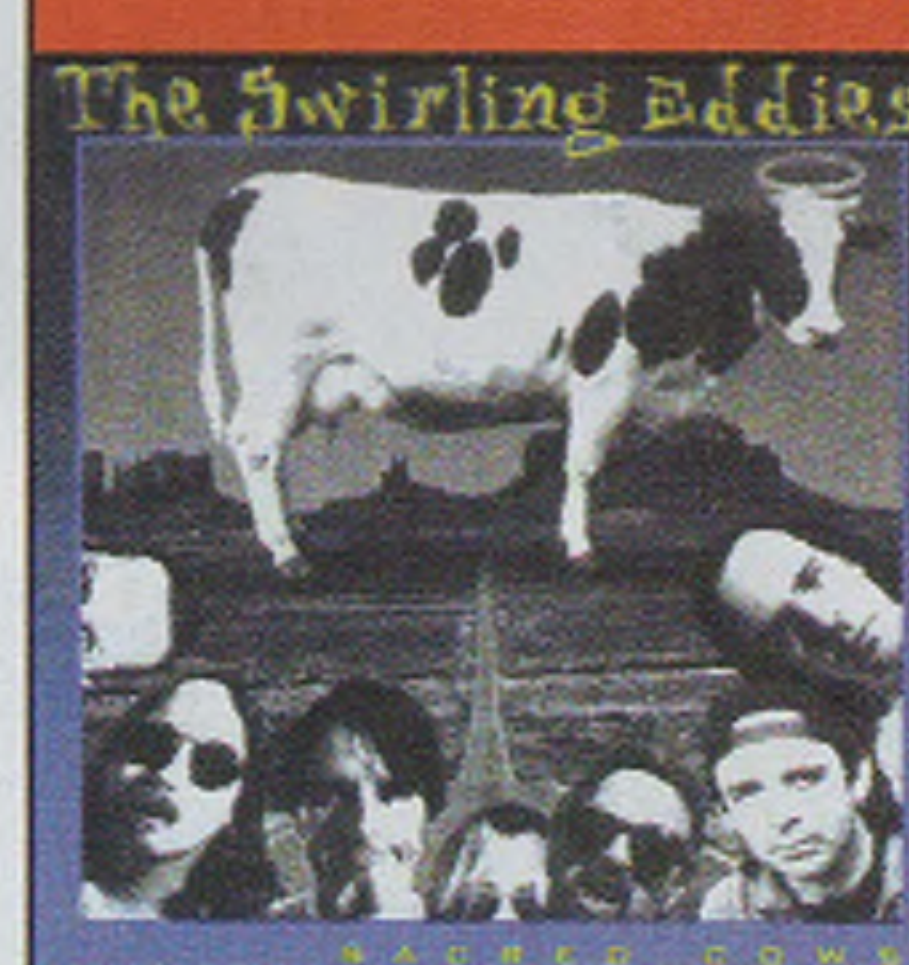


try something new from 5 minute walk

CHRIS THINKS: The Swirling Eddies have often been a hard read. Essentially a zany side project for several members of the alternative pioneers in Daniel Amos (it's not a guy, it's a band) and one guy from Adam Again, the Eddies have regularly done their best to have a good time and make people think. Which brings us to *Sacred Cows*, which, oddly, may end up as the band's biggest, most famous record: *Sacred Cows* remakes semi-famous songs from artists you prob'ly hear a lot on your parents' Christian radio station. Is it a parody? Is it a tribute? Somehow, the Swirling Eddies manage both, all in loopy fun. The album opens with DeGarmo & Key's "God Good, Devil Bad," rebuilt as an off-kilter polka (complete with extra words, such as "sun hot/snow cold" and "knife sharp/spoon dull"). Others



Swirling Eddies
Starsong



include Carman's "Satan, Bite the Dust" (the heavy lisp helps us understand how God often uses the non-glamorous to fulfill His will); dc Talk's "I Luv Rap Music" (which, as a lounge song, highlights the essential irony that the original wasn't much of a rap song, either); and a medley combining Al Denson's "Alcatraz" with Audio A's "Big House" (suddenly it's about "the BIG house"). Since ringleader Terry Taylor has, over the course of some 20 years, written some of the most profound songs of the faith—even with the "all in fun" Eddies, tracks like "Outdoor Elvis" (about cults and tabloids), "Hide the Beer, the Pastor's Here" (a rant against legalism) and "Billy Graham" (an

ode of genuine respect)—it's odd to think he may become more famous for singing a collection of songs that reduce the Gospel to a bumpersticker (except in the case of "God Good, Devil Bad," which isn't even a complete bumpersticker). *Sacred Cows* is not perfect—the novelty factor runs high, for one; also, some of these tracks are sloppy enough to be unlistenable. Still, it would be hasty to write *Sacred Cows* off as nonsense—whether as a parody of poor songwriting, or as a loopy tribute to mainstream Christian music. It's actually both. Besides, I would spend \$15 on *Sacred Cows* just for "God Good, Devil Bad." In a heartbeat. It's not often you find a punch-drunk polka where you learn a lesson, too. **7**

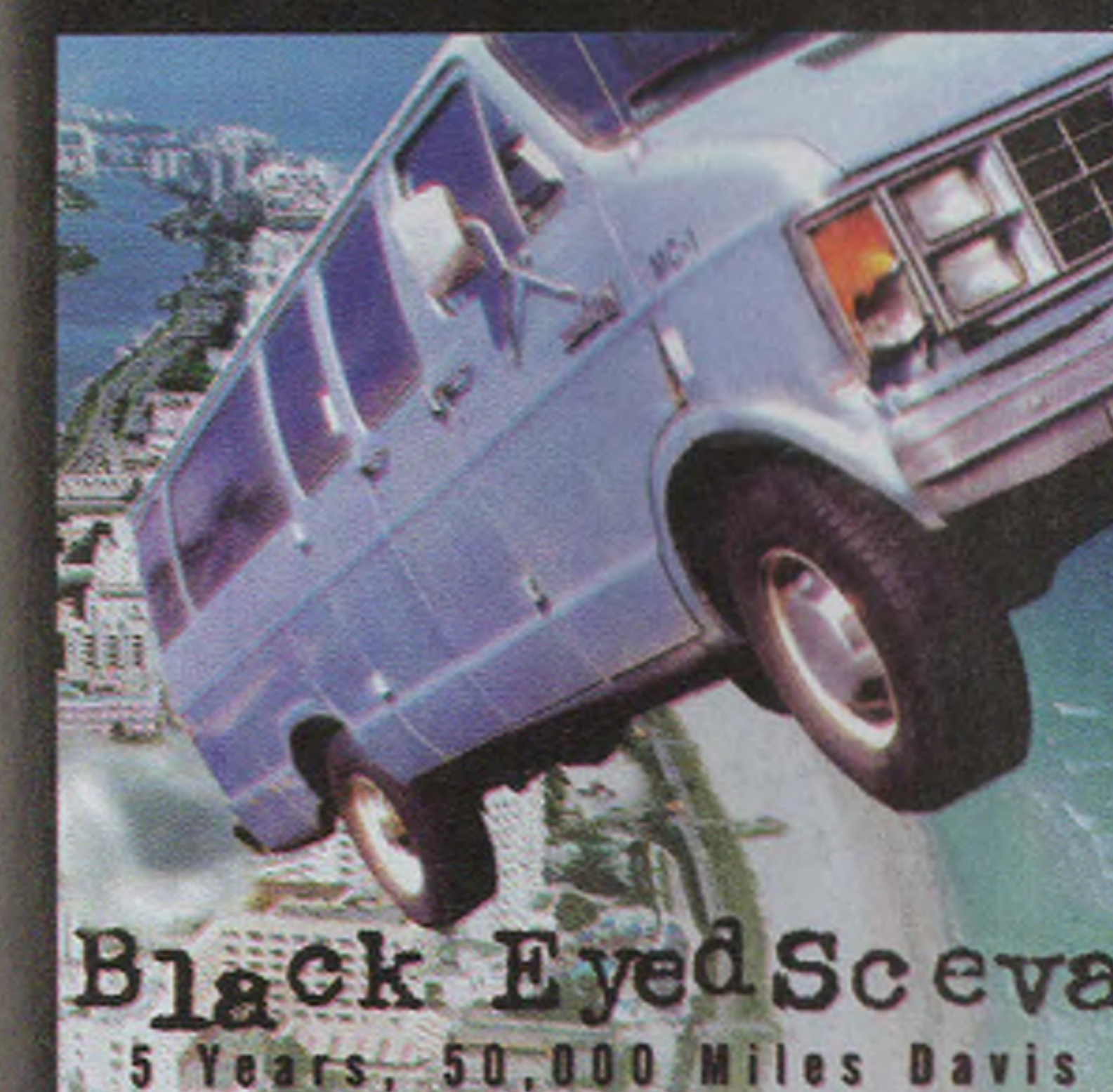
CHRIS THINKS: Like a force of nature, Poor Old Lu has often blustered onto the scene with each successive album, generally leaving the forecasters at a loss for words. *A Picture of the Eighth Wonder* is no exception. Opening with a seven-minute track, the thick and moody "Rail," it's obvious the members of Poor Old Lu like to push their luck. While it is a fine song, a prayer for lucidity amidst chaos, it's not how you open an album if you want to be pop stars. Other tracks pick up the tempo considerably, showcasing the band's ability to



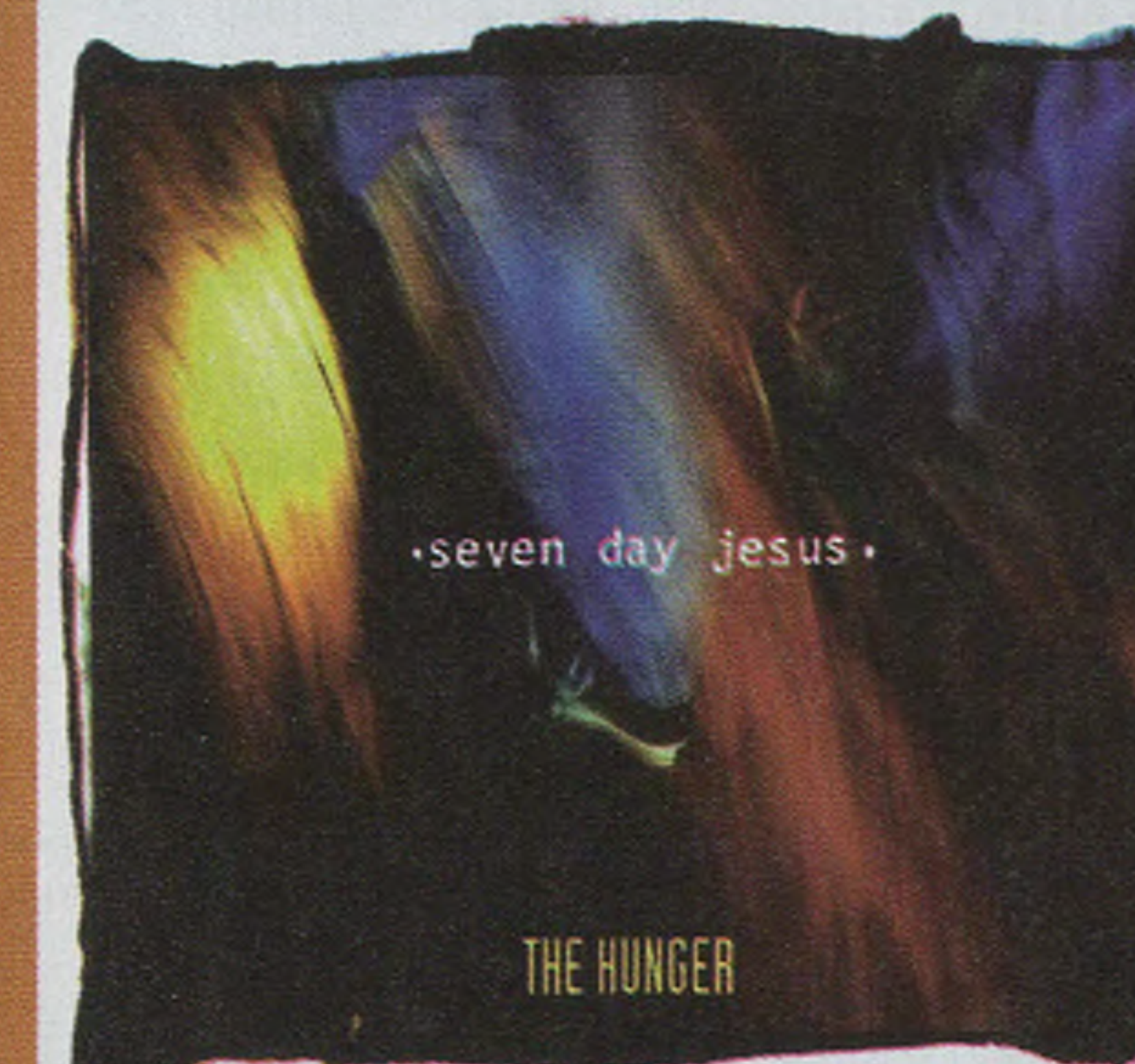
Poor Old Lu
Alarma

wed bright pop bounce with sudden, violent explosions of doubt and anger. It's like a classic rock with sudden, sharp twists. *A Picture of the Eighth Wonder* fits stylistically in between the modern pop hooks of *Mindsize*, and the vibe and atmospheric tricks of *Sin*. It's an

excellent snapshot of a band that has matured, is worthy of great respect, yet is still unpredictable as all get out. Like a force of nature. **7**

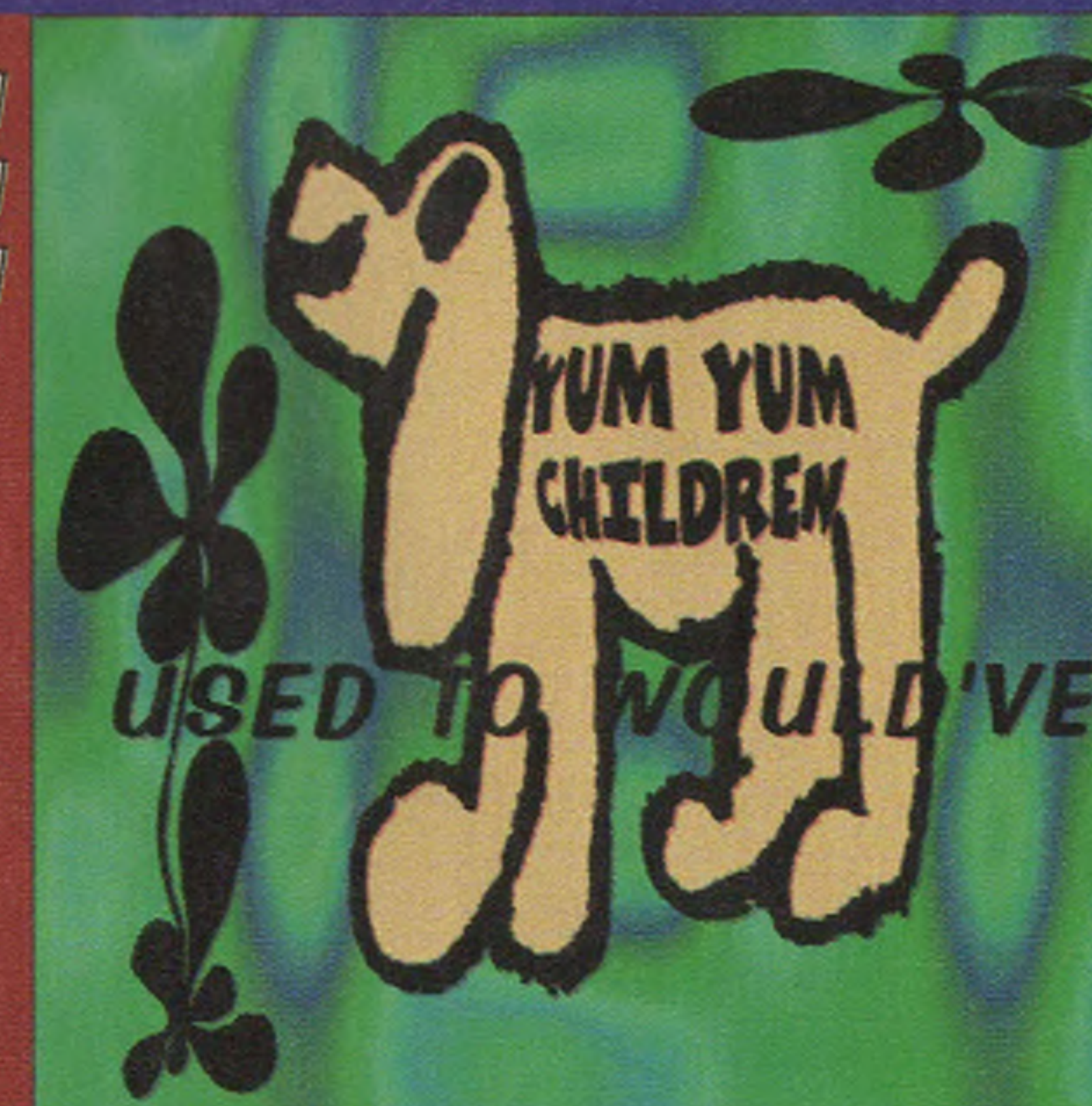


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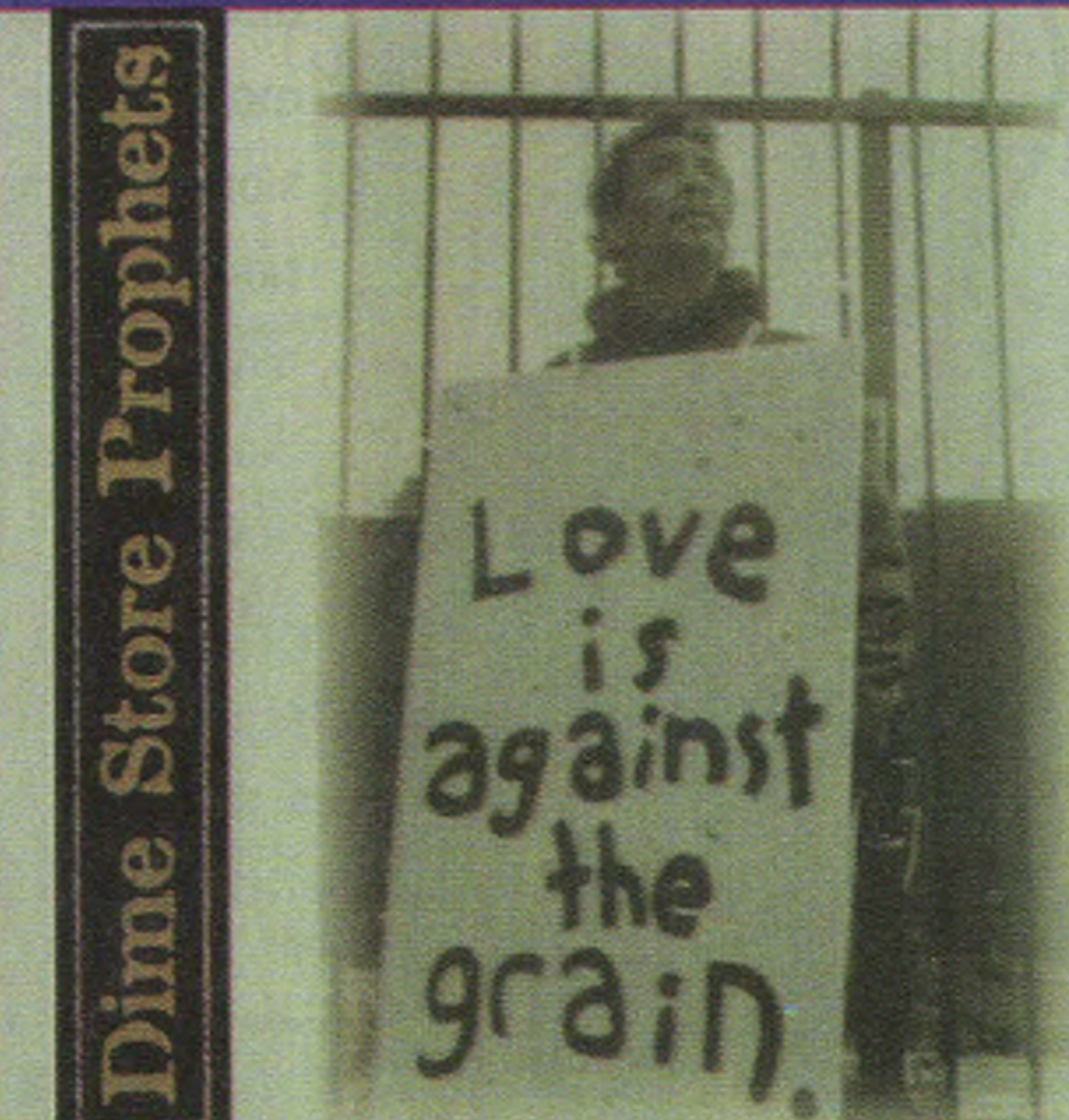


SEVEN
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JESUS

YUM
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CHILDREN



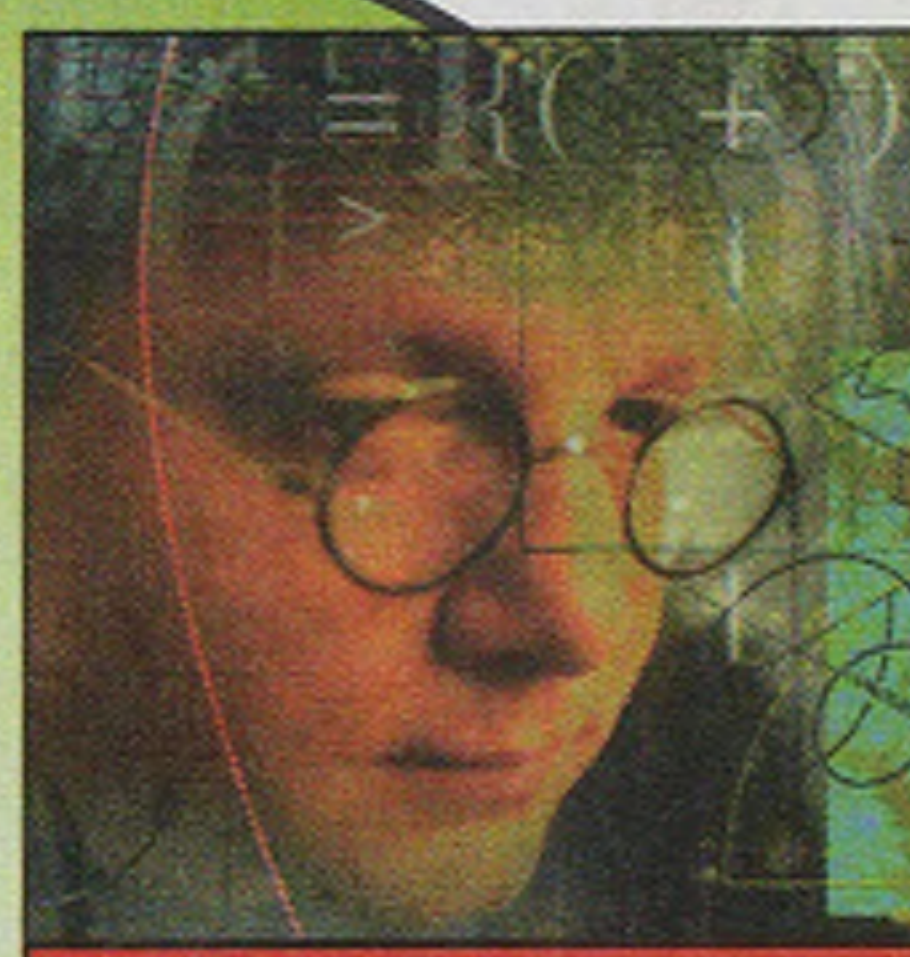
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no queso aqui

DAN THINKS: Charlie Peacock's new release *strangelanguage*, an album that has more spunk and fire than Peacock has shown since the old days, when he was "alternative"—especially with the surprising, Peter Gabriel-meets-industrial experiment on "Struck Blind"—proves that his relevancy never had any reason to be questioned. Though he may be known for his work as producer with such artists as Margaret Becker and Out of the Grey (not exactly 120 Minutes material), Peacock is as honest a writer as Michael Roe, and as deep a thinker as Terry Taylor (Daniel Amos, Swirling Eddies). And *strangelanguage* only serves to reinforce this membership in this exclusive club. Peacock the musician allows himself to stretch out and improvise on the album, whereas in the past, his musical skills have often been overshadowed by the attention he's paid to the messages in his songs. It's true that the playing often does seem to come first here, but once you get past its many musical sparks, songs like "Insult Like the Truth" will impress you with their striking lyrical metaphors. Each listener is bound to hear something different in *strangelanguage*. And to paraphrase the title cut, it might make you dead-ly nervous, or it just might bring you some relief. Whatever the case, it's guaranteed to speak to you. 7



Charlie Peacock
Re:Think

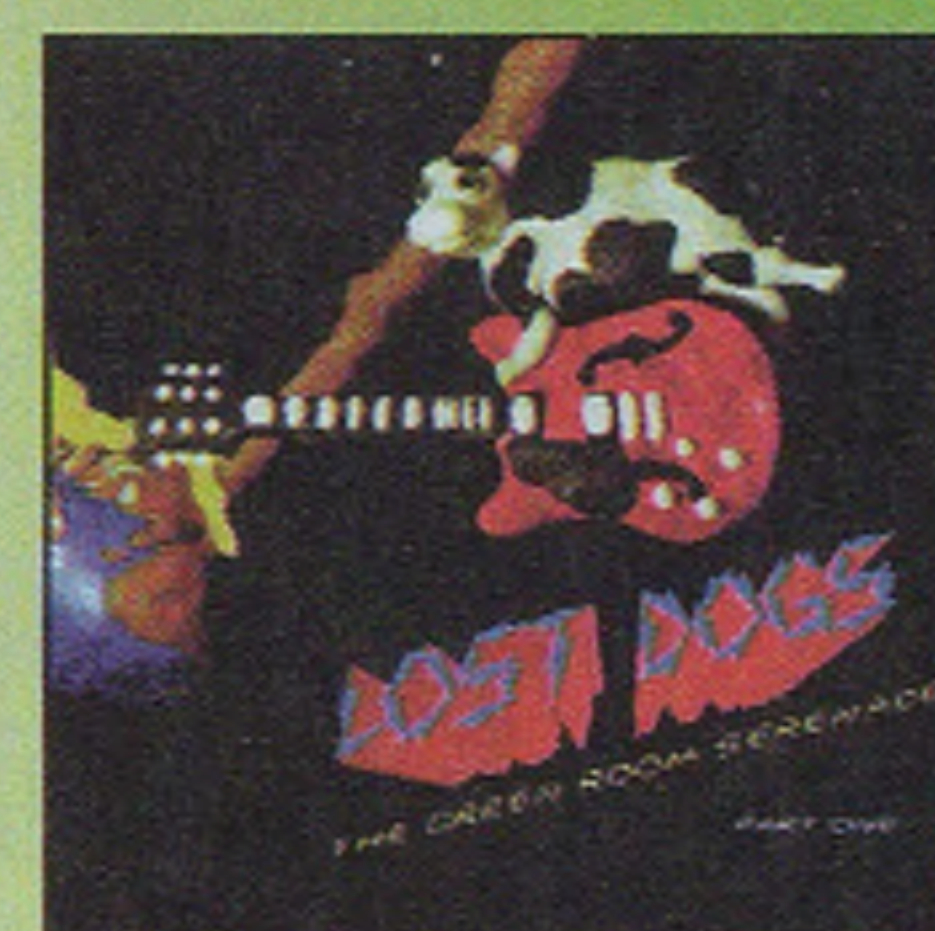


Dakota Motor Company
Atlantic/WCD

CHRIS THINKS: OK, I can admit when I've been wrong: I wasn't all that excited about the new Dakota record because I assumed, wrongly, that I'd seen all they could do. Sure, *Into the Son* was bright pop-fluff and *Welcome Race Fans* sported three brilliant songs—but between the staged exit and replacement of Davia (who always seemed a central component of Dakota's sound and image) with newcomer Melissa Brewer, and Peter King's busy schedule (pro surfing, MTV, another band), it was hard to expect much. Wow. Was I wrong. *Railroad* plays to the band's strengths, with Brewer providing sturdy competition with King's more-present vocals. Musically, it's the perfect blend—not too punk, not too pop, a surfer rock album that plants itself firmly without wiping out. Some will be disappointed that the lyrics are less overtly evangelical—*Railroad* is about observations, whether of the emptiness of a godless life ("Falling Down"), the influence of media on how we see the world ("Railroad"), or the dangers of looking up to Dakota because they're in the public eye ("Followed Me"). The album closes with the endearingly romantic "Tommy" (I don't think I've ever heard such a sweet song refer to stage diving, or such a sweet song move at quite that tempo). Welcome, Dakota fans—the ride is just getting good. 7

CHRIS THINKS: What's amazing is that while Lost Dogs is generally considered a side project for the four members—Gene Eugene hails from Adam Again and the Swirling Eddies; Terry Taylor hails from Daniel Amos and the Swirling Eddies; Derri Daugherty hails from The Choir; and Michael Roe hails from the 77's—with each successive release they congeal more and more into a real, living breathing entity known as the Lost Dogs: Not a side project, not a hobby, but a band worthy of attention on its own superlative merits. *The Green Room Serenade, Part One* (half of what was once planned to be a double-disc release) finds the four growing more comfortable with each other. The previous two records, fine as they were, suffered at times from the "kitchen sink" approach—all four songwriters took advantage of the opportunity to break character, resulting in wildly dis-

parate styles, tracked side by side. *Green Room Serenade* finds a comfortable place where all the styles meet, a breezy, triple-A record blending post-modern country and latent blues with light folk elements, while the four voices and guitars blend as superbly as could be imagined. It's not homogeneous, by any means—the album's climate includes wry indignation, sweet charm, bitter rock 'n' roll, and even a sort of Elvis impersonation. The "smorgasbord" is still available, but the four chefs work in tandem now. *Green Room Serenade* is a fine introduction to The Lost Dogs, a foursome that has become a real band—no side project, no hobby—just smart, rootsy rock for grown-ups. 7

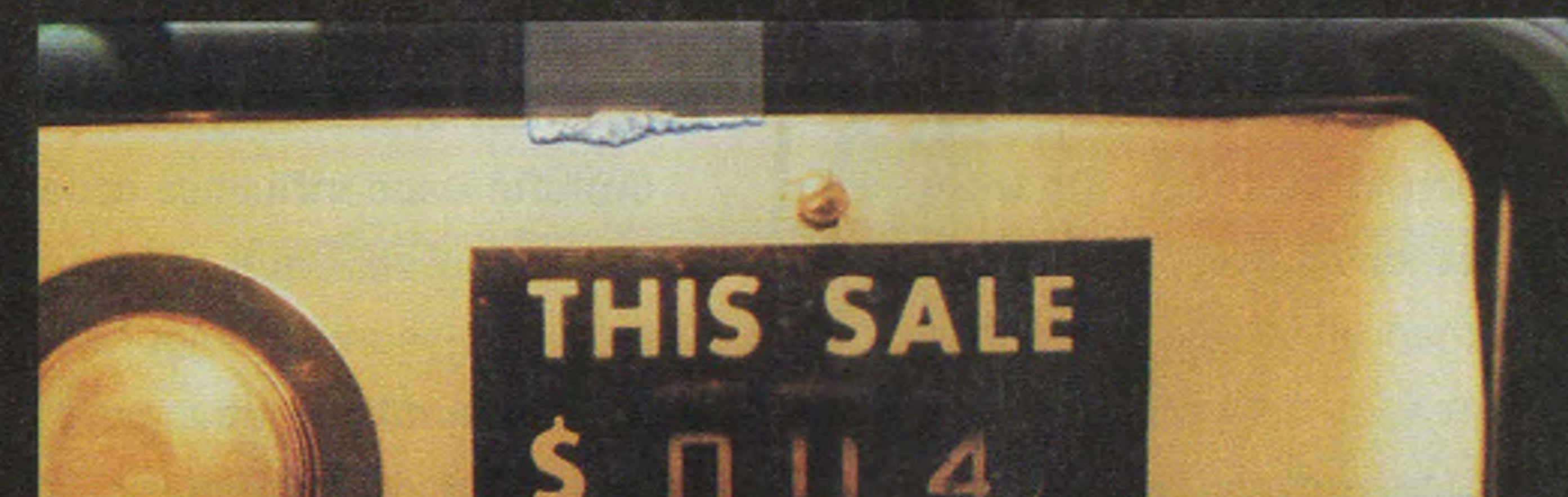


Lost Dogs
B.A.I.



Sarah Masen
re:think

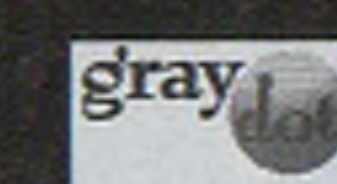
DAN THINKS: Lately, there has been a steady stream of talented female singer/songwriters receiving a lot of well-deserved attention—and the fine debut from Sarah Masen is no exception. Her literate songs and dynamic vocal range and style (reminiscent of a rock 'n' roll Sarah McLachlan), should enable Masen to make an immediate and lasting impression. Backed by a standard rock combo, occasionally accented with organ fills, Masen presents ten songs of faith and introspection to great effect. Producer Charlie Peacock has given Masen a musical accompaniment that rarely strays from its cross between recognizable folk rock elements and modern pop. The real attraction here is Masen's angelic, yet earthy, voice. The only downside to this admirable collection is the detached nature of Masen's messages. For an album that bears her name as its title, this collection seems more academic than personal. This is most clear on the cover of Victoria Williams' song "Love": Masen does a near perfect imitation of Williams' quirky vocal style, backed by an equally quirky musical arrangement; the listener realizes what a true individualist Williams is. One hopes the same can be said of Masen in the future. 7



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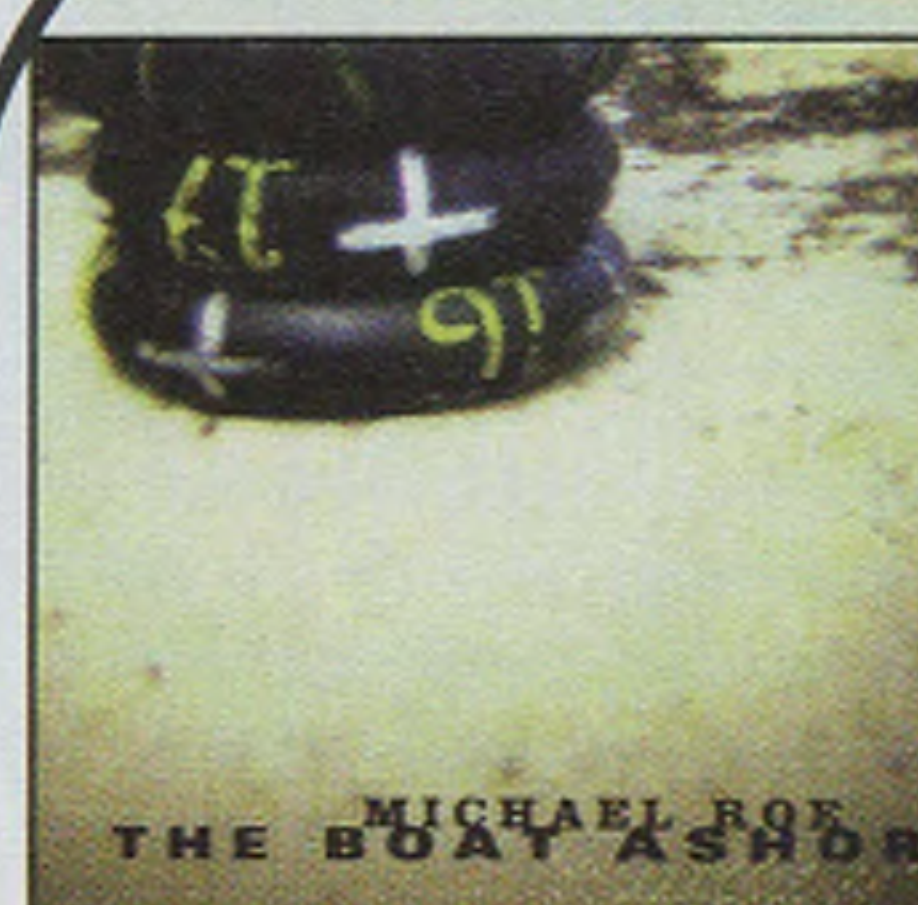
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CHRIS THINKS: Probably the biggest change in Eric Champion's songwriting is his lyrics: While *Transformation* heralds a new image and sound, those changes are simply extensions of the spiritual and mental changes Champion has undergone as he comes of age. With producers Charlie Peacock and Rick Will, Champion has left behind the push-button adult contemporary techno-praise, in favor of a warmer, more human, rock 'n' roll machine. The pop melodies are still firmly in place, but are now dressed up in electric guitars and a live rhythm section. In the past, his songs were sometimes naive; lately, Champion has been asking the hard questions and admitting his failings to God and to the world. But, while his faith may have been shaken, Champion stands fast: "Do with me what you will, I got to stand. I'm not leaving you/ Because I wanna do what He wants me to do." When all is said and done, Eric Champion is still a popster. Fortunately, in the wake of recent releases from dc Talk and Jars of Clay—which proved that "Christian pop" can be vital and interesting and even up-to-date—Champion has arrived at a very good place. *Transformation* is not so much a record from a brand-new person as it is the record we've always expected him to make. 7



Eric Champion
Essential



Michael Roe
Innocent

DAN THINKS: The title of Michael Roe's *Your Boat Ashore* may be a play on words with a much beloved/hated campfire standard, but as anyone who has followed Michael Roe's music knows, he is rarely ever caught just playing around when it comes to his music. Once again, here's another record about the struggles we face in relationships—with our significant others, as well as with God. This time, with his latest solo record, the 77's frontman has put these struggles to a quieter, more acoustic accompaniment. Sure, there's a great Stones-ey sounding thing at the end, but most of this plays like soft rock music with—of all things—a Grateful Dead influence added in for good measure. Just listen to "Love Like Gold." Is that Jerry Garcia noodling on the guitar part, or am I just hearing things? Roe has always been a master of taking the conversations we usually only have with our bathroom mirrors and putting them to music. In "Some Kind of Dream" he sings, "But I found out too late that it's gonna take more than a good voice/ To make a good love song." Fortunately, Roe has more than a good voice, as he continues to sing us to shore with revealing and honest love songs. 7

CHRIS THINKS: Imagine you're John Schlitt: For years, you've been the voice of the official rock band of youth pastors everywhere, and then one day the band's final founding member stops touring and suddenly, it's not a band anymore, it's a "franchise." The next logical step is to open a Petra in every mall in America. Add the fact that the secular bands Petra has artistically competed against—Styx, Journey, REO Speedwagon—are only touring now on the Vegas circuit. It's time to rethink your options. While Schlitt hasn't left Petra behind, he is wisely expanding his musical vocabulary. *Unfit for Swine* finds Schlitt wholly reinventing himself for the '90s, splintering the sanded edges, to undo a lot of the polishing



John Schlitt
Word

that's brought Petra:Nashville (the home franchise, if you will) such a pristine shine. *Unfit for Swine* is actually pretty good, with whining, modern rock guitars and dark, angular chord changes. Oddly, the weakest link is Schlitt's voice—there's a lot of baggage to deal with, a lot of arena-rock posturing he needs to unlearn—but *Unfit for Swine* finds him working hard on that, too. Petra fans will be surprised. Those who'd written him off might want to give Schlitt a chance as well. 7



Wonder in Blue
N'Soul

CHRIS THINKS: *Rain and Other Things* from Wonder in Blue, the brainchild of producer Brian Hardin, is awash in lush, pop symphonies of dreams and despair. Addressing both his desperate need for God's love and his struggles to forgive those who have betrayed him, Hardin has set his home movies to a soundtrack that recalls the willowy pop of Enya, PM Dawn or Deep Forest. The epicenter of the record seems to be "Do You Really Want to Know Love?" which adds a Rhythm Saints groove to the proceedings, as the narrator recounts the tales of two people who have lost love; the first person goes crazy from loneliness, the second simply picks up her life and goes on. "You'd think we'd find a way; we have the technology," Hardin wryly observes, concluding, "Maybe only in God's love can we love completely." Wrapping up with a note of hope—Hardin dedicates a sweet song of faithfulness to his two young sons—gives *Rain and Other Things* just the right balance. Wonder in Blue is a remarkable project that will have meaning for anyone who's ever had a broken heart. 7



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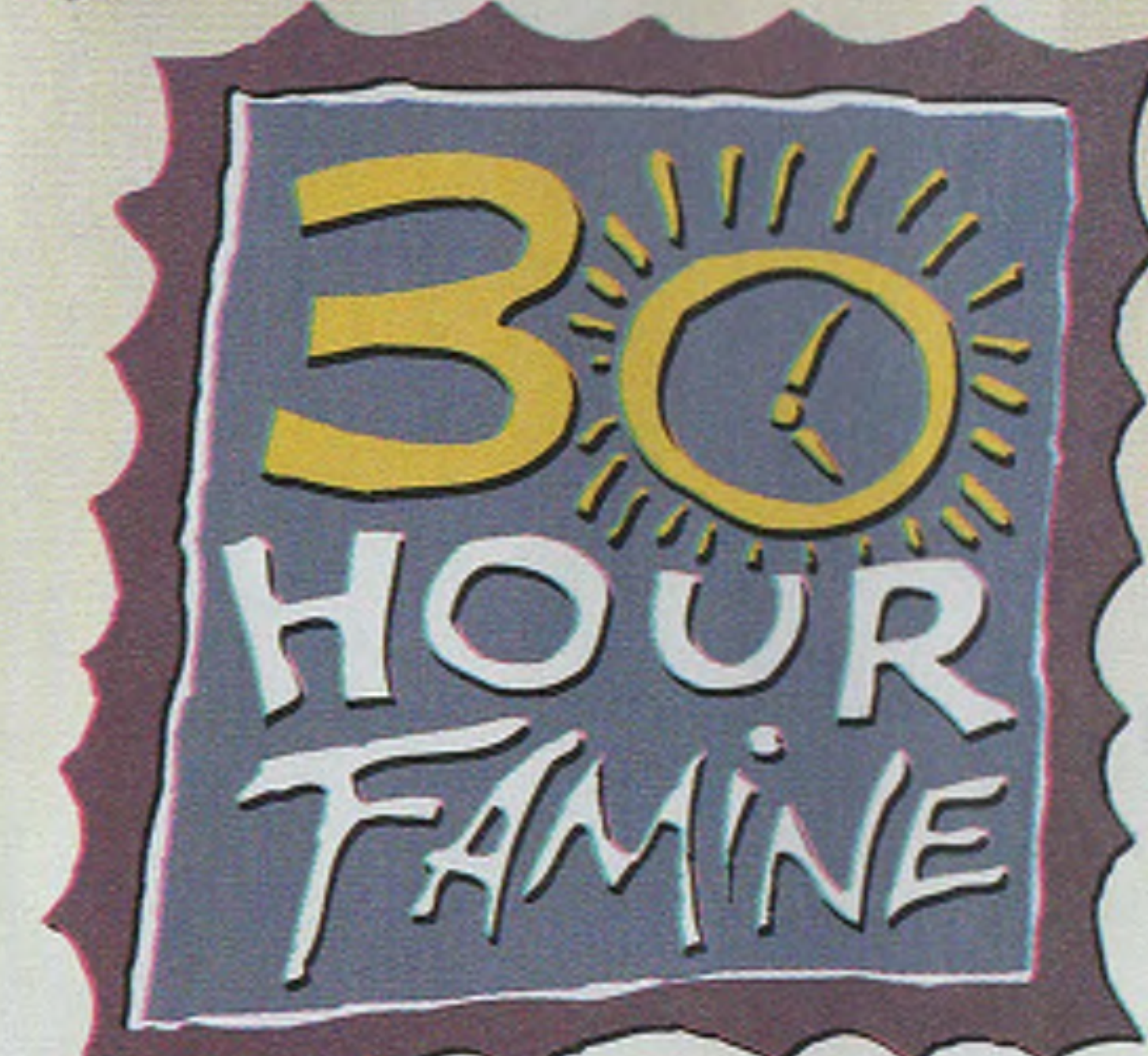
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CHRIS THINKS: With members that are all youngsters—they're just hitting their early 20s—it's not surprising that there's little that's subtle about Seven Day Jesus. With a lead singer who's rich voice conjures up comparisons with Russ Taff and a less-mournful Eddie Vedder, and a rock combo that packs the wallop of a seasoned garage band, Seven Day Jesus just totally shreds from the get-go. Strong melodies are wed to thick, steady rhythms and adroit, crisp guitar licks. The words are as frank: Seven Day Jesus is less interested in philosophy and image than in getting right to the Gospel point. And while "simple" is often a dangerous combination, in the hands of Seven Day Jesus, it's proven that sometimes "simple" can be just another word for "solid." This is a dandy of a debut. **7**

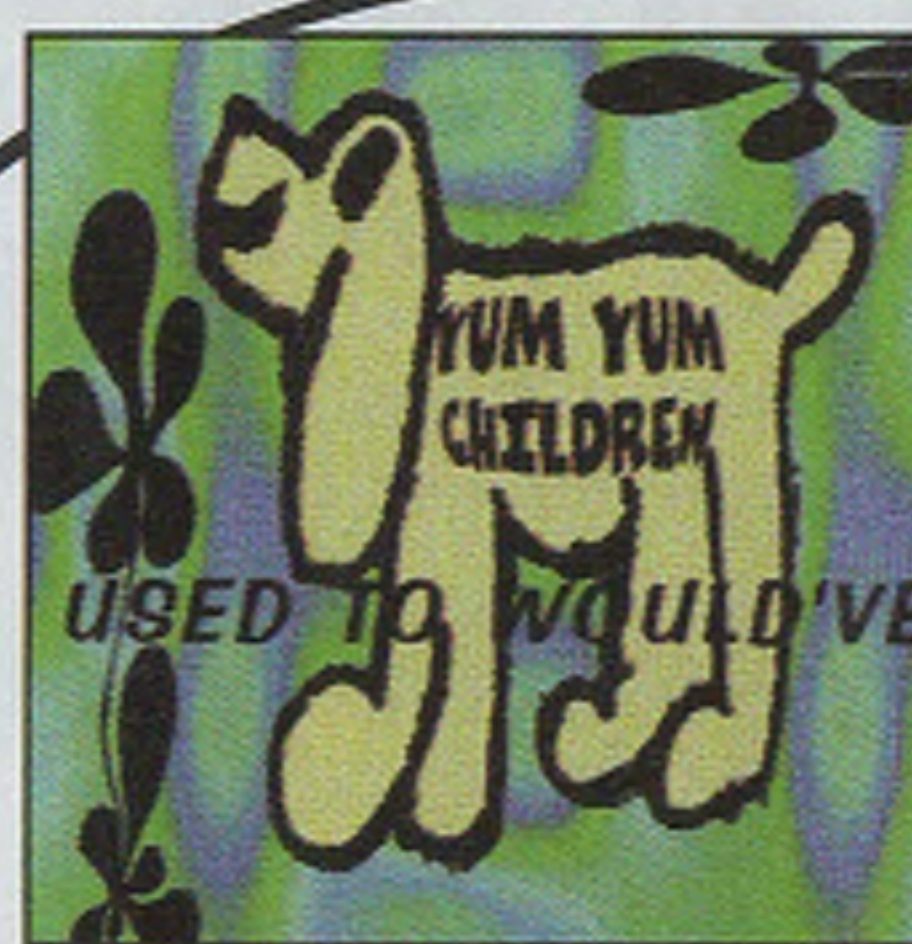


Seven Day Jesus
Five Minute Walk

CHRIS THINKS: Much like reciting the book of Ecclesiastes (it's in the Bible) to a bitter soundtrack of clanging trashcans and the sweet voice of an angel, the Aleixa debut *Honey Lake* is a gorgeously dark pop masterpiece, mixing hard edged, industrial dance rock with hauntingly beautiful female vocals. Like Abba on acid. Some will be disturbed (even frightened) by the dark Scriptural imagery—but it's darn catchy. **7**



Aleixa
Liquid Disc/Flying Tart



Yum Yum Children
Five Minute Walk

CHRIS THINKS: Mixing colors off a twisted palette, the Yum Yum Children label debut, *Used To Would've*, will split listeners right down the middle: some will love the quirky, surf-wave rock, the reedy lead vocals, and the wacky sensibilities that bring the record *thisclose* to novelty record status; others will hate the record for the same reasons. The highlight, though is the haunting and brilliant "Life Without Jesus," which starts off dangerously placidly, before building to the inevitable conclusion. *Used to Would've* shows Yum Yum Children to have one of the most unique voices in Christian rock—if you can stand it, you'll love it. **7**

CHRIS THINKS: Newcomers Mary Said have a penchant for taking steady, if unremarkable, post-arena rock 'n' roll and filling it with poetic word pictures, a sort of literary guitar rock. With only six chances to try the mix out on their EP, *Detergent*, it sometimes works: While the explosive "Applesauce" will probably eventually make sense (I hope), the yearning for spiritual cleansing with "Detergent" is on target. **7**



Mary Said
B.A.I.



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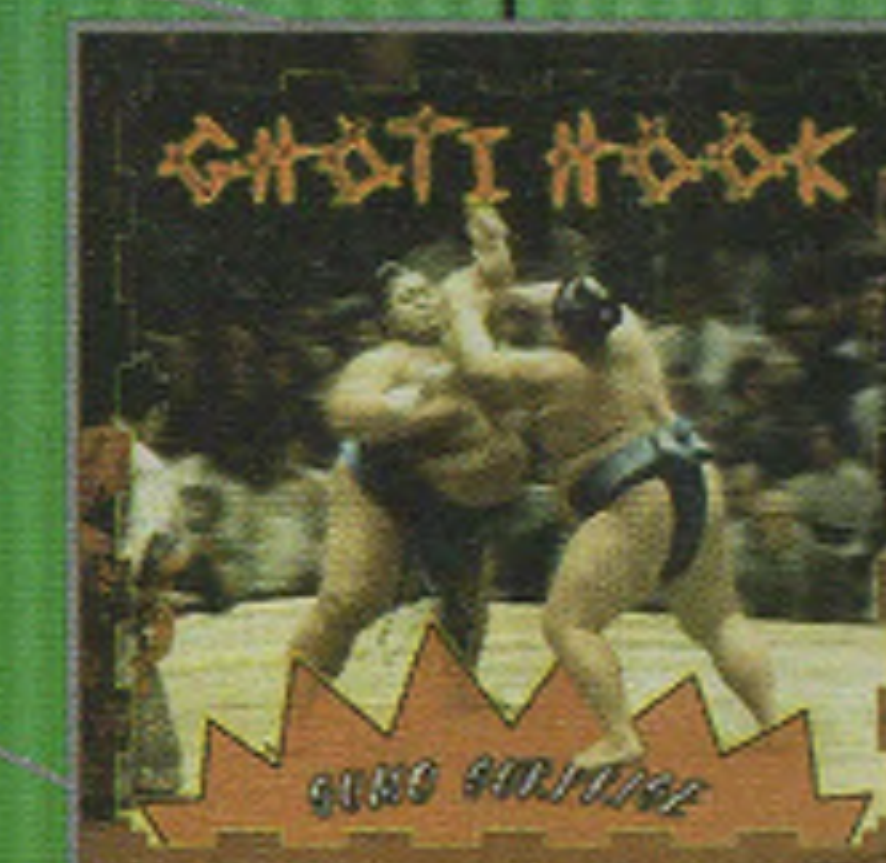
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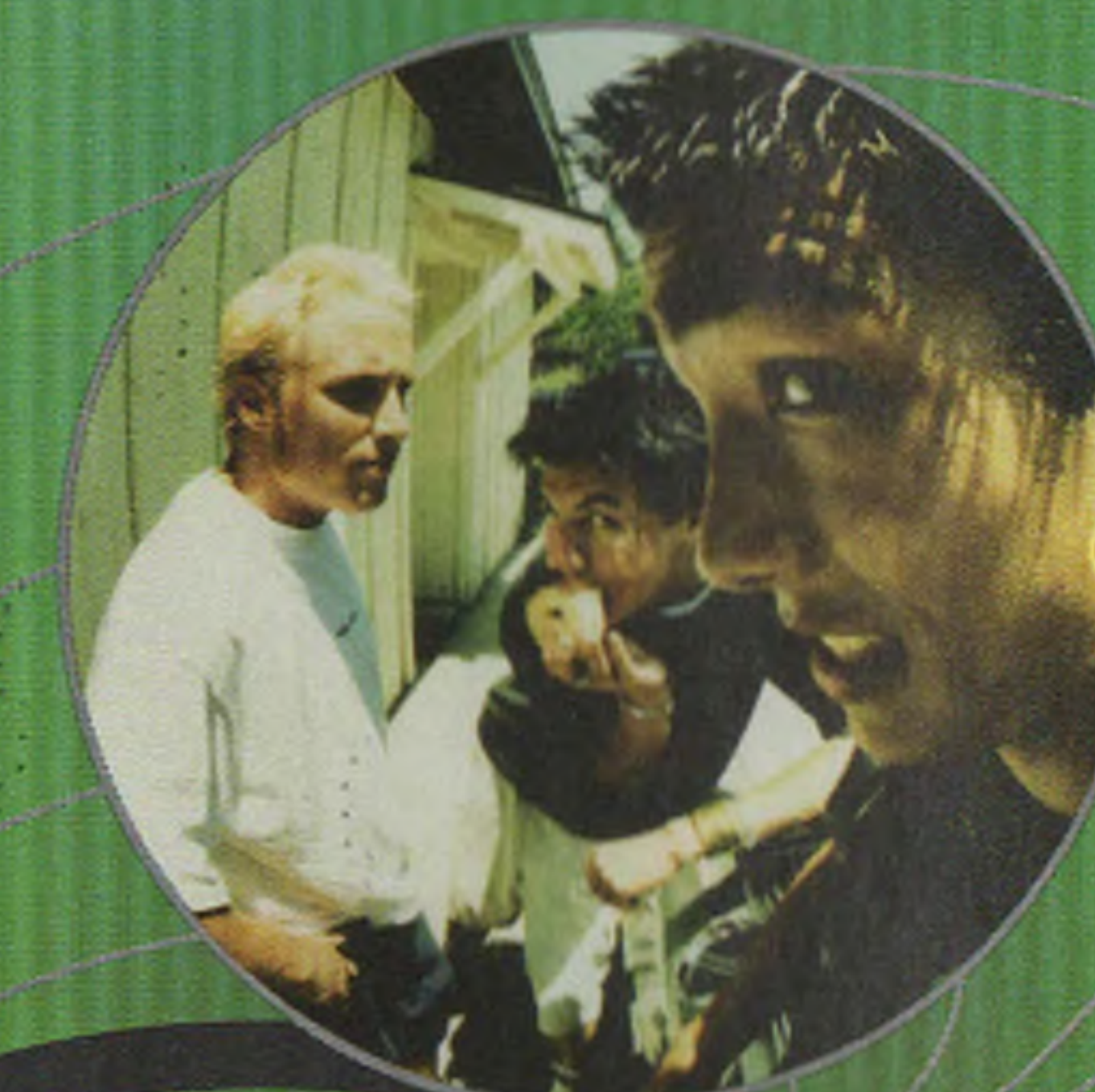
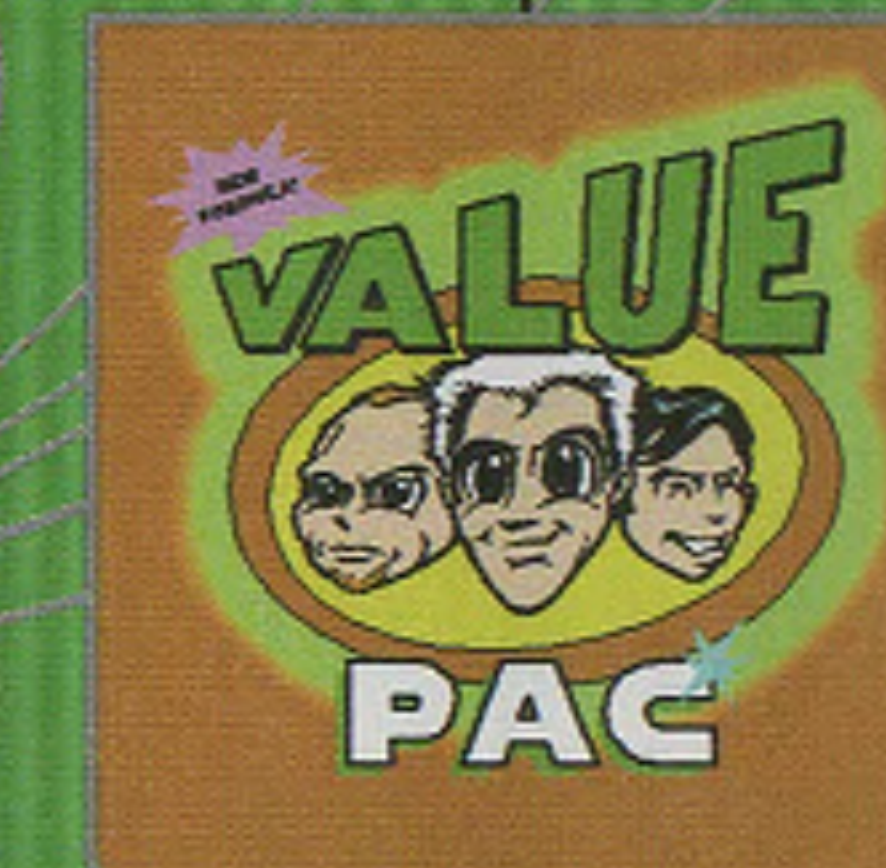
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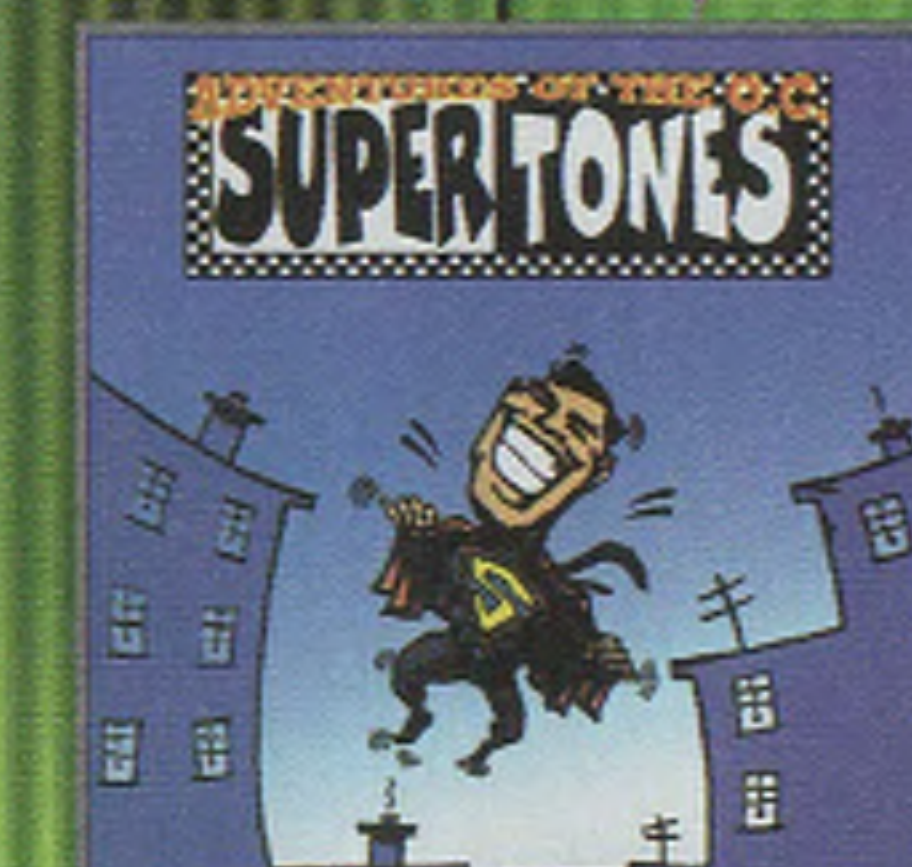
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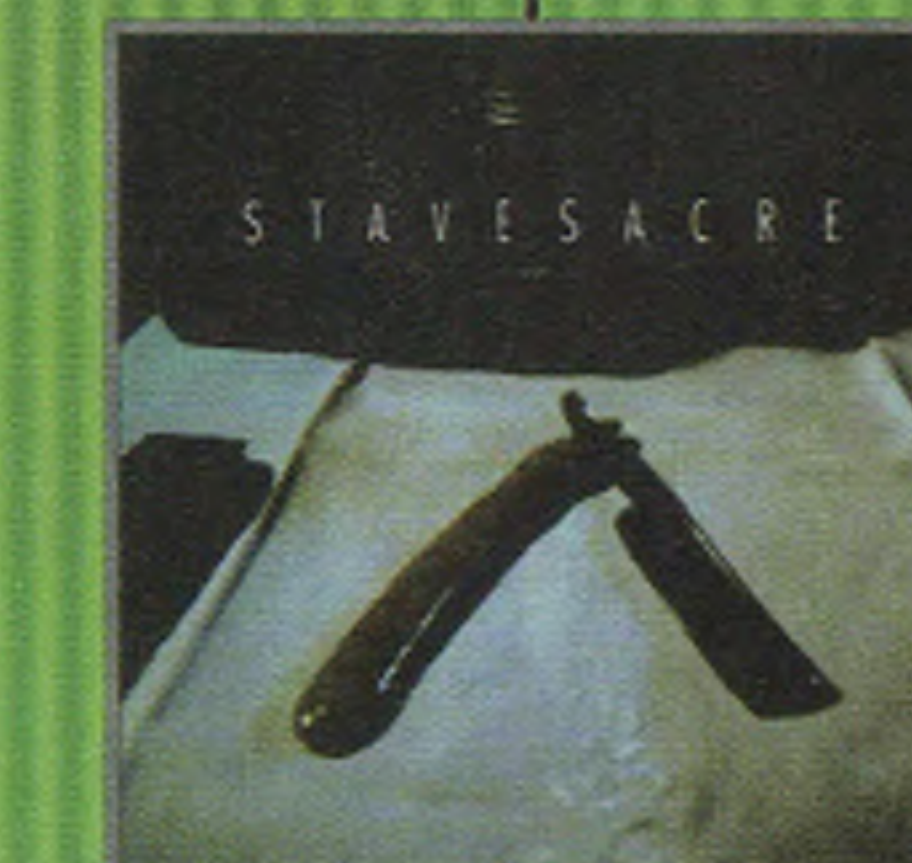
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 - 6 UNLEADED
Everdown/Tooth & Nail
 - 7 PEACE IN THE GALAXY
Mortification/Rowe
 - 8 GRP
Mortal/Five Minute Walk
 - 9 RESPONSIBILITY
90 lbs. Wuss/Tooth & Nail
 - 10 THE RED ROOF
Deliverance/Intense

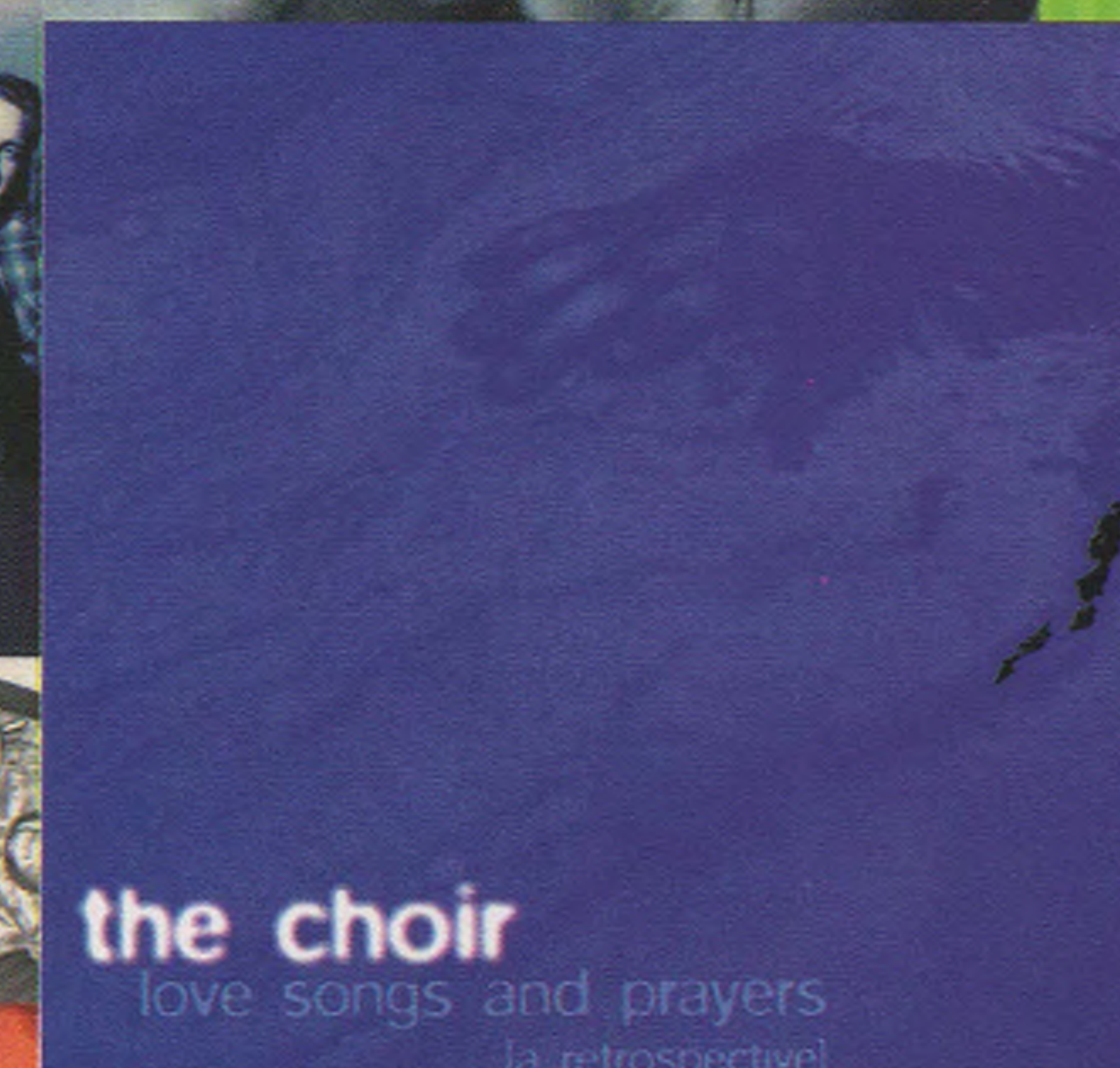
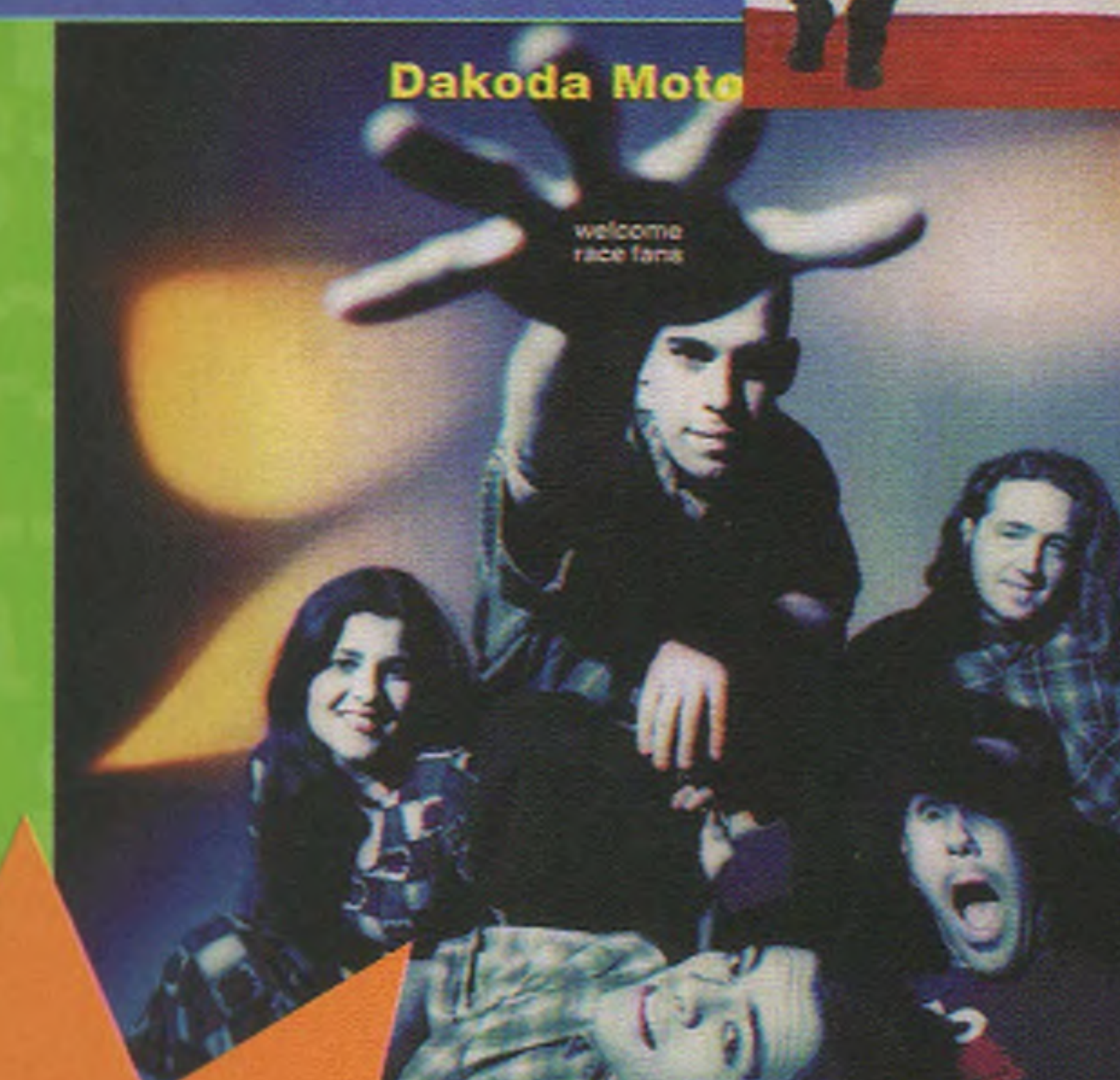
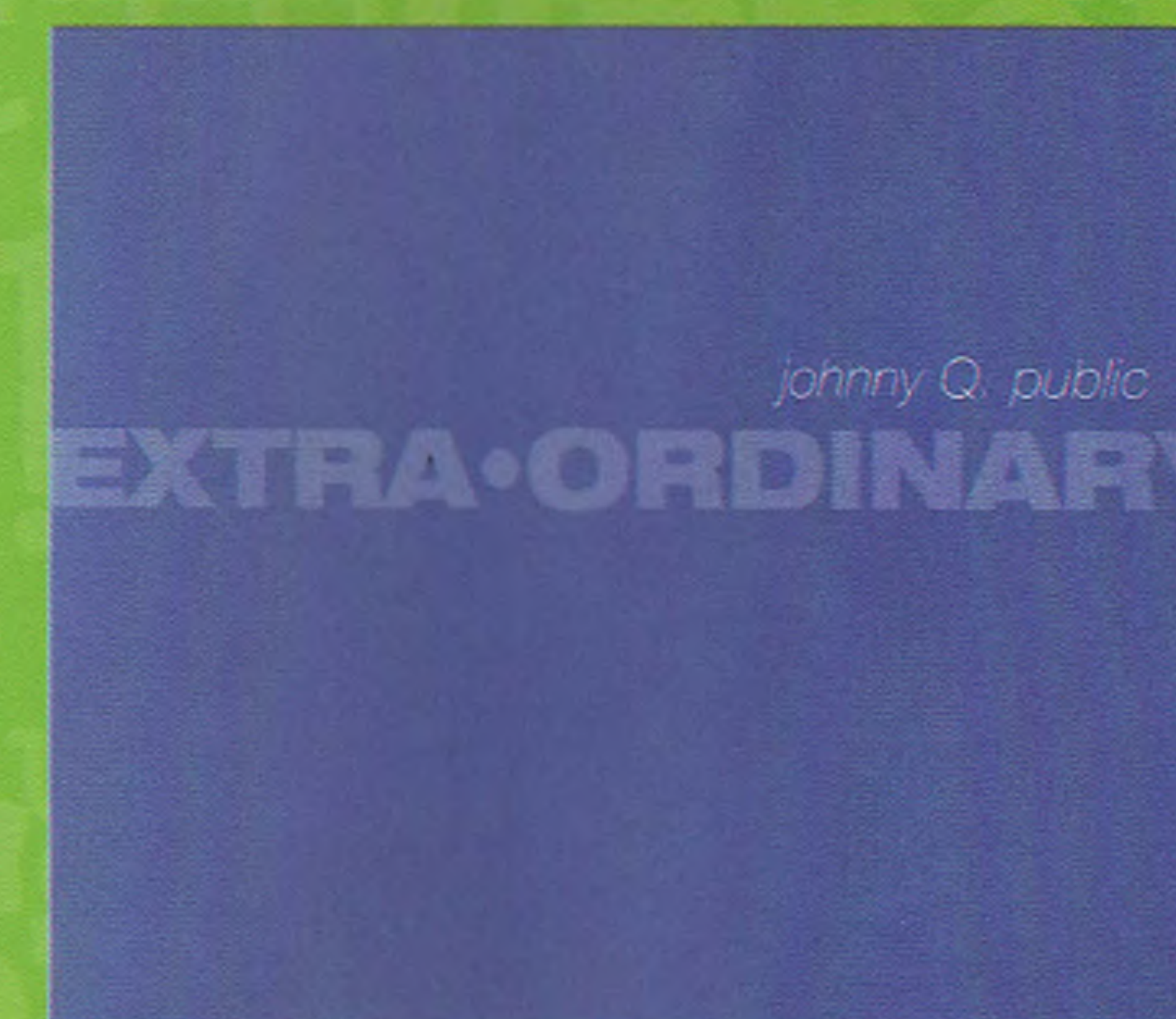
- ### Club
- 1 SWEET SALVATION
World Wide Message Tribe
Warner Alliance
 - 2 TAKE CONTROL
Code of Ethics/Forefront
 - 3 SIMPLE LITTLE LOVE SONG
Gina/N-Soul
 - 4 EMMANUEL
Hypersonic/Essential
 - 5 HOW I'M FEELIN'
YWFC/Big Doggie
 - 6 JUST TRYIN' TA STAY UP
Faze/GropeTree
 - 7 I NOW LIVE (REMIX)
Crystal Lewis/N-Soul
 - 8 MOMMA'S PRAYERS
E.T.W./Forefront
 - 9 GRP
Paradigm Shift/N-Soul
 - 10 END OF THE DAY
Echoing Green/Ryx

- ### Rock
- 1 FOREVER
Third Day/Reunion
 - 2 SECRET
Audio Adrenaline/Forefront
 - 3 IN THE EVENT
Dogs of Peace/Sparrow
 - 4 RAILROAD
Dakota Motor Co/Holiday
 - 5 RITUAL
White Heart/Curb
 - 6 THE LION'S DEN
Guardian/Mynrh
 - 7 LIQUID
Jars of Clay/Essential
 - 8 AWAY WITH THE SWINE
The Choir/Tattoo
 - 9 GOD IS NOT A SECRET
Newsboys/Stor Song
 - 10 LIKE IT, LOVE IT, NEED IT
ENTER IN
 - 11 ENTER IN
Petro/Word
 - 12 B.C.
Plankeye/Tooth & Nail
 - 13 DROUGHT
Common Children/Tattoo
 - 14 SUMMERTHROW
Resurrection Band/Grry
 - 15 GOD
Rebecca St. James
Forefront

- ### MODERN Rock
- 1 AWAY WITH THE SWINE
The Choir/Tattoo
 - 2 STRUCK BY THE CHORD
Plankeye/Tooth & Nail
 - 3 DROUGHT
Common Children/Tattoo
 - 4 WHO CAN BE AGAINST ME
Supertones/Tooth & Nail
 - 5 IT DOESN'T MATTER
Blackball/Metro One
 - 6 FOR THE LOVE OF MY COUNTRY
Poor Old Lu/Alarma
 - 7 RAILROAD
Dakota Motor Co/Holiday
 - 8 KINGFLUX
Mortal/Five Minute Walk
 - 9 BURDEN
Raspberry Jam/Metro One
 - 10 CAROUSEL
Driver Eight/Tooth & Nail
 - 11 B.C.
Plankeye/Tooth & Nail
 - 12 A TIME TO HEAL
Seven Day Jesus
 - 13 LIQUID
Jars of Clay/Essential
 - 14 STRENGTH
Seven Day Jesus
 - 15 IF YOU ASK
The Inkings/Dwarf

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sarah masen

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